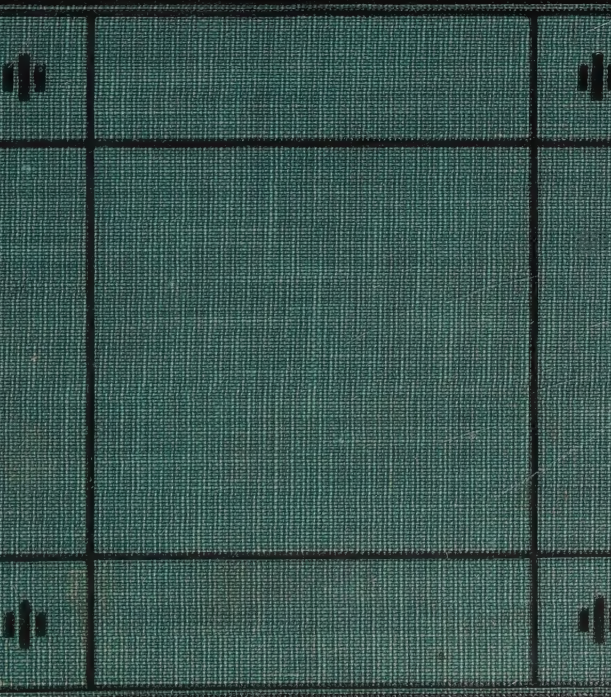
THE MERCHANT of VENICE



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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

BY

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

WITH INTRODUCTION, CRITICAL COMMENTS, EXPLANATORY NOTES, AND QUESTIONS FOR CLASS STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Sources of the Play

The Merchant of Venice is a play artistically constructed from earlier stories.[1] It contains two fundamental sub-plots, or story-devices, the story of the Caskets and the story of the Pound of Flesh, or of the Bond. Through whatever other literatures the Caskets story came, it is now an accepted belief that Shakespeare drew this story from a popular collection of Latin stories called *Gesta Romanorum*, compiled about the year 1300, translated by *Wynkin de Worde*, and published through six editions prior to the writing of *The Merchant of Venice*. The story of *The Pound of Flesh* has passed through many versions in the literatures of many countries. One important version is given in the old ballad, *Gernutus the Jew*,[2] "A new Song, showing the crueltie of Gernutus, a Jewe, who lending to a merchant an hundred crownes, would have a pound of his fleshe, because he could not pay him at the time appointed. . . ." The story most closely resembling the Pound of Flesh story in *The Merchant of Venice* is in Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorne* in which there figure a lady of Belmonte; the usurer, a Jew of Mestre near Venice; and a lady-judge in disguise who expounds the law of flesh-without-blood.

[1] These stories are given fully in Furness' *New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice*, Appendix. Also in Moulton, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*.

[2] Reprinted in Percy's *Reliques*.

The elopement of Jessica, though found in some form in the literature of many countries, has been traced by Dunlop to the Fourteenth Tale of Massuccio di Salerno, which tells how the daughter of a rich miser of Naples robbed her father and eloped with her lover by the aid of a faithful servant. The episode of the rings is also given in *Il Pecorne.*

It is now clear that these stories were in the main embodied in a drama before the appearance of *The Merchant of Venice.* In 1579, Stephen Gosson published *The Schoole of Abuse* in which he refers to a play called *The Jew, representing,* as he says, *the greediness of worldly chusers, and bloody mindes of Usurers.* Dekker's *The Jew of Venice, The Venesyon Comodey,* and Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* are doubtless rich sources from which Shakespeare drew to produce the finished product of his play.

The Story of the Play

As the play opens, Antonio, a merchant of Venice, is shown in a strangely sad mood with his three friends trying to offer cheer. Of these friends, Antonio loves best Bassanio whom he has earlier befriended and who is deeply in love with Portia, the gifted and wealthy heiress of Belmont. In order to hold his place among her princely suitors, Bassanio must needs borrow a large sum of money, which he seeks to secure from Antonio. At that moment, Antonio's entire wealth was represented in his merchant vessels far away at sea. Upon Antonio's credit, however, Bassanio secures the

needed sum from the Jewish money-lender, Shylock, on condition that Antonio shall forfeit a pound of flesh in case the money is not repaid the day the bond falls due.

Although the forfeiture of the pound of flesh was stipulated in seeming jest, Shylock was desperately in earnest, for Antonio had often insulted him and thwarted his plans. The hatred of Shylock was intensified because of the elopement of his only daughter, Jessica, with Lorenzo, another friend of Antonio.

Meanwhile, Bassanio tries his fortune at Portia's house. Her father had stipulated in his will that whichever suitor should choose the one of the three caskets which contained her likeness, should have her hand and the rich estates at Belmont. Though other suitors fail, Bassanio is successful, and in the moment of plighted troth, news reaches Belmont of Antonio's total loss and of Shylock's malicious claim of the forfeiture. Bassanio hurries back to assist his friend in distress, and Portia secretly resolves to be a factor in clearing Antonio.

First getting instructions from learned lawyers and disguising herself as a doctor of laws, Portia appears in the trial scene to sit in judgment. She first tries to divert Shylock from his wicked purpose, but in vain. "Scorning the spirit of justice, and deaf to the voice of mercy . . . rejecting thrice the amount of the bond, and standing immovable on the letter of the law, Shylock pushes his revenge to the very point of making the fatal incision, when she turns the letter of the law against him, strips him of penalty, principal, and all,

and subjects even his life to the mercy of the Duke." He is given his life on condition of signing a deed securing all his wealth to his daughter Jessica who had already stolen his ducats and his jewels.

Bassanio, overjoyed at Antonio's triumph, desired to pay the judge the three thousand ducats in question, but she asked instead the ring from his finger, the ring he had sworn to keep forever when they exchanged vows. However, at a suggestion from Antonio he reluctantly gives the ring to the fair young advocate. Nerissa, disguised as Portia's clerk, had similarly secured her ring from Gratiano. When all return to Belmont, Nerissa pretends to be angry with Gratiano for giving away the ring. Portia overheard this quarrel and pointed to Bassanio as one who could not prove unfaithful to his promise. When even Bassanio fails to produce his ring, Portia pretends to be very angry. A general explanation follows. The "amusing snarl" is untangled. Joy reigns in every heart—especially in the heart of the Merchant of Venice, three of whose ships have just arrived with their costly cargoes.

Comments on the Play

"*The Merchant of Venice* is generally esteemed the best of Shakespeare's comedies. . . . In the management of the plot, which is sufficiently complex without the slightest confusion or incoherence, I do not conceive that it has been surpassed in the annals of any theatre."—Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, 1837.

"There are three central movements. . . . The Conflict, the Mediation, the Return. Of the first movement, there are two threads . . . the Property-conflict and the Love-conflict. In the first thread, the antagonists are Antonio, the Christian, and Shylock, the Jew. . . . The second thread unfolds the Love-conflict, which has here three phases, represented by Portia, Jessica, and Nerissa. The second Movement, the Mediation, has the same two threads. The Property-conflict is brought to a successful conclusion by Portia, disguised as a lawyer; the Love-conflict has ended in all three cases with a happy solution, namely, marriage. But both friends and lovers have been torn asunder in the performance of their various functions; hence the third Movement will be the Return which brings all to Belmont, the blissful abode of harmony."—Snider, *Vol. I.*, p. 305.

"Where here is the love of a Christian? Verily, it would have been a satire on Christianity had Shakespeare meant to represent it in the persons who are enemies to Shylock, *and who are hardly worthy to unloose the latchets of his shoes.* The bankrupt, Antonio, is a poor-spirited creature, without energy, without strength enough to hate, or of course, to love, with the heart of a worm, whose flesh is really worth nothing else but to bait fish withal. He never pays back the three thousand ducats to the cheated Jew. Bassanio, too, never returns him his money. . . . As for Lorenzo, he is an accomplice in an infamous burglary, and under Prussian laws he would have been condemned to fif-

teen years in the penitentiary, and to be branded, and to stand in the pillory."—Heine, *quoted in Furness*, p. 450.

SHYLOCK

"The central figure, in the eyes of modern readers and spectators, is of course Shylock, though there can be no doubt that he appeared to Shakespeare's contemporaries a comic personage. In the humaner view of a later age, Shylock appears as a half-pathetic creation, a scapegoat, a victim; to the Elizabethan public, with his rapacity and his miserliness, his usury, and his eagerness to dig for another the pit into which he himself falls, he seemed not terrible, but ludicrous. They did not even take him seriously enough to feel any real uneasiness as to Antonio's fate, since they all knew beforehand the issue of the adventure. They laughed when he went to Bassanio's feast 'in hate, to feed upon the prodigal Christian'; they laughed when, in the scene with Tubal, he suffered himself to be bandied about between exultation over Antonio's misfortunes and rage over the prodigality of his runaway daughter; and they found him odious when he exclaimed, 'I would my daughter were dead at my foot and the jewels in her ear!' He was, simply as a Jew, a despised creature; he belonged to the race which had crucified God himself; and he was doubly despised as an extortionate usurer."—Brandes, *William Shakespeare.*

"Shylock is abhorred and execrated; but skill of the poet has endowed him with qualities which preserve

him from contempt. His fierceness, cruelty, and relentlessness are dignified by intellectual vigor. His actions are deliberate, they are the emanations of his bold and masculine understanding. Let the art with which he negotiates his bond be contemplated; consider his coolness, his plausible exaggeration of the dangers to which Antonio's property is subjected; his bitter sarcasm and insulting gibes; . . . follow him into court, behold him maintaining his superiority in argument, unmoved by insult and unawed by power, till disappointment leaves him nothing to contend for and anguish stops his speech, and then let his claims to intellectual distinction be decided on."—Skottowe, *quoted in Furness*, pp. 427–8.

ANTONIO

"A peculiar interest attaches to him from the state of mind in which we first see him. He is deeply sad, not knowing wherefore: a dim, mysterious presage of evil weighs down his spirits, as though he felt afar off the coming on of some great calamity; yet this strange unwonted gloom, sweetened with his habitual gentleness and good-nature, has the effect of showing how dearly he is held by such whose friendship is the fairest earthly purchase of virtue. . . . And such is Antonio: a kind-hearted, sweet-mannered man; of a large and liberal spirit; affable, generous, and magnificent in his dispositions; patient of trial, indulgent to folly, free where he loves, and frank where he hates; in prosperity modest, in adversity cheerful; craving wealth for the uses of virtue, and as the organs and sinews of friend-

ship, so that the more he is worth, the more he seems worthy—his character is one which we never weary of contemplating."—Hudson, *Shakespeare: His Life, Art, and Characters.*

PORTIA

"The secret of the charm which has won for Portia the suffrages of all readers is the perfect balance of qualities in her character. She is the melting-point of brightness, force, and tenderness. And, to crown the union, Shakespeare has placed her at the supreme moment of life, on the boundary line between girlhood and womanhood when the wider aims and deeper issues of maturity find themselves in strange association with the abandon of youth. The balance thus becomes so perfect that it quivers, and dips to one side and the other. Portia is the saucy child as she sprinkles her sarcasms over Nerissa's enumeration of the suitors: in the trial she faces the world of Venice as a heroine. She is the ideal maiden in the speech in which she surrenders herself to Bassanio; she is the ideal woman as she proclaims from the judgment seat the divinity of mercy."—Moulton, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, pp. 88–89.

"But, besides the dignity, the sweetness, and tenderness which should distinguish her sex generally, she is individualized by qualities peculiar to herself; by her high mental powers, her enthusiasm of temperament, her decision of purpose, and her buoyancy of spirit. . . . There is a commanding grace, a high-bred, airy elegance, a spirit of magnificence in all she says and does. . . .

"But all the finest parts of Portia's character are brought to bear in the Trial Scene. There she shines forth all her divine self. Her intellectual powers, her elevated sense of religion, her high honorable principles, her best feelings as a woman, are all displayed. . . . She has two objects in view: to deliver her husband's friend, and to maintain her husband's honor by the discharge of his just debt, though paid out of her own wealth ten times over. It is evident that she would owe the safety of Antonio to anything rather than to the legal quibble with which her cousin Bellario has armed her, and which she reserves as a last resource. . . .

"Her subsequent surrender of herself in heart and soul, of her maiden freedom, and her vast possessions, can never be read without deep emotion."—Mrs. Jameson, *Characteristics of Women*, pp. 66–84.

"I chose Portia, then as now, my ideal of a perfect woman,—

> The perfect woman nobly planned,
> To warn, to comfort, and command;
> The creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food;
> For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles;

the wise, witty woman, loving with all her soul, and submitting with all her heart to a man whom everybody but herself (who was the best judge) would have judged her inferior; the laughter-loving, light-hearted, true-hearted, deep-hearted woman, full of keen perception, of active efficiency, of wisdom prompted by love, of tenderest unselfishness, of generous magnanimity;

noble, simple, humble, pure; true, dutiful, religious, and full of fun; delightful above all others, the woman of women."—Mrs. F. A. Kemble in *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1876.

BASSANIO

"Bassanio, though something too lavish of purse, is a model of a gentleman, in whose character and behavior all is order and propriety, with whom good manners are the proper outside and visibility of a fair mind—the natural foliage and drapery of inward refinement and delicacy and rectitude. Well-bred, he has that in him which, even had his breeding been ill, would have raised him above it and made him a gentleman."—Hudson, *Shakespeare: His Art, Life, and Characters.*

"In coarser terms, from a less favorable point of view, Bassanio has lived like a prodigal, run in debt with his friends, and now coolly proposes to his chief creditor to make a serious addition to his debt, on the speculation that it will give him a chance to pay all by that very precarious, as well as undignified, resort of making up to an heiress."—Lloyd, *Critical Essays on Shakespeare*, p. 546.

JESSICA

"Jessica, though properly kept subordinate, is certainly 'A most beautiful pagan—a most sweet Jew.' She cannot be called a sketch—or if a sketch, she is like one of those dashed off in glowing colours from the rainbow palette of a Rubens; she has a rich tinge of

Orientalism shed over her, worthy of her Eastern origin. In another play, and in any other companionship than that of the matchless Portia, Jessica would make a very beautiful heroine of herself. Nothing can be more poetically, more classically fanciful and elegant than the scenes between her and Lorenzo—the celebrated moonlight dialogue, for instance, which we all have by heart."—Mrs. Jameson, *Characteristics of Women.*

NERISSA

"Nerissa is a good specimen of a common genus of characters; she is a clever confidential waiting-woman, who has caught a little of her lady's elegance and romance; she affects to be lively and sententious, falls in love, and makes her favor conditional on the fortune in the caskets, and, in short, mimics her mistress with good emphasis and discretion. Nerissa and the gay, talkative Gratiano are as well matched as the incomparable Portia and her magnificent and captivating lover."—Mrs. Jameson, *Characteristics of Women.*

Costumes of Leading Characters

Shylock. Edwin Booth's costume for Shylock consisted of a long, dark green gown, a dark brown gaberdine with flowing sleeves and hood, a variegated scarf about the waist, with a leather pouch, red leather pointed shoes, and tawny orange-colored hat.

Antonio. A Merchant's costume consisted of doublet, trunk hose, stockings, and shoes, with a large cape or

short cloak of silk or brocade, and ruffs at the neck and wrists.

Bassanio. His costume is that of a noble of Venice, consisting of doublet, trunk hose, stockings and shoes, with a large-sleeved gown, or toga, over all.

As a lover, he would probably wear a doublet and breeches of satin with gold buttons, a lace ruff, a hat of rich velvet, a silk coat, silk stockings, a flower in one hand, and a handkerchief in the other.

Portia. As a noble lady, her everyday dress consists of a gown of gold cloth, or costly velvet, with fine cambric ruffs, her front hair in massive curls with smaller curls at the side, the back hair crimped and fastened into a plait interwoven with strings of pearl.

As a doctor of common law, she wore a tight doublet, silk belt, trunk hose, and stockings—all black. Over all was worn an ungirdled gown with upright collar and long open sleeves; on the head a high cap with narrow brim and flat top.

Time Analysis of the Play

The entire action of The Merchant of Venice is now commonly thought to consume but eight days, according to P. A. Daniel in his *Time-Analysis of the Plots of Shakespeare's Plays.* The first day includes the action in Act I. After an interval of about a week, the action in Act II., Scenes I.–VII., fills the second day. The action of the third day, after a day's interval, includes that in Act II., Scenes VIII. and IX. Then follows a long interval of slightly more than two months, bringing the

time of the action within a fortnight of the maturity of the bond. The fourth day's action is then that of Act III., Scene I. Then, after a bit more than a fortnight, the action of the remaining four days comes without interruption as follows: fifth day—Act III., Scenes II.–IV.; sixth day—Act III., Scene V. and Act IV.; seventh and eighth days, Act V.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE DUKE OF VENICE.

THE PRINCE OF MOROCCO, } *suitors to Portia.*
THE PRINCE OF ARRAGON, }

ANTONIO, *a merchant of Venice.*

BASSANIO, *his friend, suitor likewise to Portia.*

SALANIO, }
SALARINO, } *friends to Antonio and Bassanio.*
GRATIANO, }
SALERIO, }

LORENZO, *in love with Jessica.*

SHYLOCK, *a rich Jew.*

TUBAL, *a Jew, his friend.*

LAUNCELOT GOBBO, *the clown, servant to Shylock.*

OLD GOBBO, *father to Launcelot.*

LEONARDO, *servant to Bassanio.*

BALTHASAR, } *servants to Portia.*
STEPHANO, }

PORTIA, *a rich heiress.*

NERISSA, *her waiting-maid.*

JESSICA, *daughter to Shylock.*

Magnificoes of Venice, Officers of the Court of Justice, Jailer, Servants to Portia, and other Attendants.

SCENE: *Partly at Venice, and partly at Belmont, the seat of Portia, on the Continent.*

The Merchant of Venice

ACT I.

Scene I.—*Venice. A Street.*[1]

Enter Antonio, Salarino, *and* Solanio.

Antonio. In sooth,[2] I know not why I am so sad:
It wearies me, you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,[3]
What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn;
And such a want-wit[4] sadness makes of me,
That I have much ado to know myself.

Salarino. Your mind is tossing on the ocean;
There, where your argosies[5] with portly sail,—
Like signiors and rich burghers[6] of the flood,

[1] Look up any good account of Venice. Notice that the streets are canals. Where then, does this scene take place?

[2] In *truth.* From Anglo Saxon *sóth,* truth.

[3] Got possession of it. In Act I., Scene II., line 8, the expression *comes by* is used with a similar meaning.

[4] Dunce, or simpleton. To lack *wit* was to be a fool.

[5] "Argosies are large ships either for merchandise or for war. The name was probably derived from the classical ship Argo, which carried Jason and the Argonauts in quest of the golden fleece."—Hudson.

[6] *Signior,* lord; *burgher,* a citizen. The merchant vessels of Antonio are spoken of as lords and rich citizens of the sea.

Or, as it were, the pageants[7] of the sea,—
Do overpeer the petty traffickers,
That curtsy[8] to them, do them reverence,
As they fly by them with their woven wings.

Solanio. Believe me, sir, had I such venture[9] forth,
The better part of my affections would
Be with my hopes abroad. I should be still[10]
Plucking the grass, to know where sits the wind;
Peering in maps for ports, and piers, and roads;[11]
And every object that might make me fear
Misfortune to my ventures, out of doubt,
Would make me sad.

Salar. My wind, cooling my broth,
Would blow me to an ague, when I thought
What harm a wind too great might do at sea.
I should not see the sandy hour-glass run,[12]
But I should think[13] of shallows and of flats;

[7] A spectacular display or show to entertain some distinguished personage or the public. The shipping vessels of Antonio are, as compared with the "petty traffickers," elaborate enough to form such a magnificent display.

[8] *Curtsy.*—"Suggested by the rocking, ducking motion in the petty traffiquers caused by the wake of the Argosie as it sails past them." —Furness.

[9] Merchandise, or what is risked for gain to the perils of wind and wave. *Forth* means *abroad.*

[10] Always, constantly.

[11] Places where vessels might be safely anchored.

[12] In Shakespeare's time, an hour-glass was fixed near the pulpit on an iron stand to fix the length of the sermon. It was not thought right to preach beyond the hour.

[13] Without thinking.

And see my wealthy Andrew[14] dock'd in sand,[15]
Vailing her high-top lower than her ribs,[16]
To kiss her burial![17] Should I go to church,
And see the holy edifice of stone,
And not bethink me straight of dangerous rocks,
Which, touching but my gentle vessel's side,
Would scatter all her spices on the stream;
Enrobe the roaring waters with my silks;[18]
And, in a word, but even now worth this,[19]
And now worth nothing? Shall I have the thought
To think on this, and shall I lack the thought,
That such a thing bechanc'd would make me sad?
But tell not me; I know, Antonio
Is sad to think upon his merchandise.

Anto. Believe me, no. I thank my fortune for it,
My ventures are not in one bottom trusted,
Nor to one place; nor is my whole estate
Upon the fortune of this present year:
Therefore my merchandise makes me not sad.

[14] Richly freighted ship—one of many ships supposed to have been named after the distinguished Genoese admiral, Andrea Doria, who died in 1560.

[15] Stranded.

[16] *Vailing* is *lowering*, from the French *avaler*, to swallow. The picture is of a ship lying on the side with its topmast in the sand.

[17] Burial-place.

[18] Isaac the Jew, Ivanhoe, Chapter X., says: "In the Gulf of Lyons I flung over my merchandise to lighten the ship, robed the seething billows in my choice silks, perfumed their briny foam with myrrh and aloes."

[19] The force of *this* should be expressed by a gesture denoting size or bulk.

Salar. Why, then you are in love.
Anto. Fie, fie!
Salar. Not in love neither? Then let us say you're sad
Because you are not merry; and 'twere as easy
For you to laugh and leap, and say you're merry
Because you are not sad. Now, by two-headed Janus,[20]
Nature hath fram'd strange fellows in her time:
Some that will evermore peep through their eyes
And laugh, like parrots, at a bag-piper;
And other[21] of such vinegar aspect
That they'll now show their teeth in way of smile,
Though Nestor swear the just be laughable.[22]

Enter Bassanio, Lorenzo, *and* Gratiano.

Salar. Here comes Bassanio, your most noble kinsman,
Gratiano, and Lorenzo. Fare ye well:
We leave you now with better company.
Salar. I would have stay'd till I had made you merry,
If worthier friends had not prevented[23] me.

[20] The image of Janus, the Latin Sun-god, was made with two faces, one on either side of his head. The allusion is here doubtless to the ancient two-faced images, one face being gloomy, the other gay.

[21] *Others.* *Other* was frequently used when, as here, it is contrasted with some.

[22] *Nestor.* The oldest of the Greek heroes in the Trojan war, famed for wisdom and gravity. The sternest might well smile at what he might regard laughable.

[23] *Gone before* or *anticipated.* See etymology of ***prevent.***

Anto. Your worth is very dear in my regard.
I take it, your own business calls on you,
And you embrace th' occasion to depart.

Enter BASSANIO, LORENZO, *and* GRATIANO.

Salar. Good morrow, my good lords.
Bassanio. Good signiors both, when shall we laugh? say, when?
You grow exceeding strange:[24] must it be so?
Salar. We'll make our leisures to attend on yours.
[*Exeunt* SALARINO *and* SOLANIO.
Lorenzo. My Lord Bassanio, since you've found Antonio,
We two will leave you; but at dinner-time,
I pray you, have in mind where we must meet.
Bass. I will not fail you.
Gratiano. You look not well, Signior Antonio;
You have too much respect upon[25] the world:
They lose it that do buy it with much care.
Believe me, you are marvellously changed.
Anto. I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage,[26] where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.
Grati. Let me play the Fool:[27]
With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come;
And let my liver rather heat with wine

[24] Very much of a stranger. Shakespeare often uses *exceeding* as an adverb.

[25] Consideration for.

[26] "All the world's a stage."—As You Like It, II., 7.

[27] Let me play the part of jester.

Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.[28]
Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster?
Sleep when he wakes? and creep into the jaundice
By being peevish? I tell thee what, Antonio,—
I love thee, and it is my love that speaks,—
There are a sort of men whose visages
Do cream and mantle like a standing pond;
And do[29] a wilful stillness entertain,
With purpose to be dress'd in an opinion
Of wisdom,[30] gravity, profound conceit;[31]
As who should say, *I am Sir Oracle*,[32]
And when I ope my lips, let no dog bark!
O my Antonio! I do know of these,
That therefore only are reputed wise
For saying nothing; who, I'm very sure,
If they should speak, would almost damn those ears,
Which, hearing them, would call their brothers fools.[33]
I'll tell thee more of this another time:
But fish not, with this melancholy bait,

[28] There was an old belief that sorrow, sighs, or groans robbed the heart of its life-blood.

[29] "And *who* do." The relative pronoun is frequently omitted.

[30] Reputation for wisdom.

[31] Deep thought.

[32] One conceited enough to imagine that he can speak with the authority of an Oracle. The Oracle at Delphi was implicitly believed and followed among the Greeks.

[33] Those, who are thought wise because they say nothing, would, if they should speak, cause their hearers to be damned by uttering the forbidden reproach "thou fool." Matt. 5:22.

For this fool-gudgeon,[34] this opinion.—
Come, good Lorenzo.—Fare ye well, awhile:
I'll end my exhortation after dinner.

Loren. Well, we will leave you, then, till dinner-time.

I must be one of these same dumb-wise men,
For Gratiano never lets me speak.

Grati. Well, keep me company but two years more,
Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.

Anto. Farewell: I'll grow a talker for this gear.[35]

Grati. Thanks, i' faith; for silence is only commendable
In a neat's tongue dried, and a maid not vendible.[36]

[*Exeunt* GRATIANO *and* LORENZO.

Anto. Is that any thing now?

Bass. Gratiano speaks an infinite deal of nothing, more than any man in all Venice. His reasons are as two grains of wheat hid in two bushels of chaff: you shall seek all day ere you find them; and when you have them, they are not worth the search.

Anto. Well; tell me now, what lady is the same
To whom you swore a secret pilgrimage,
That you to-day promised to tell me of?

Bass. 'Tis not unknown to you, Antonio,
How much I have disabled mine estate,
By something showing a more swelling port[37]

[34] The *Gudgeon* was the name of a small fish "easy to be taken." Only foolish, young anglers would spend time catching it.

[35] "For this business," or "upon this particular occasion."

[36] Not having other attractions to commend her.

[37] By keeping up more magnificent appearances.

Than my faint means would grant continuance:[38]
Nor do I now make moan to be abridged[39]
From such a noble rate; but my chief care
Is to come fairly off from the great debts
Wherein my time, something too prodigal,
Hath left me gaged.[40] To you, Antonio,
I owe the most, in money and in love;
And from your love I have a warranty
T' unburden all my plots and purposes,
How to get clear of all the debts I owe.

Anto. I pray you, good Bassanio, let me know it;
And if it stand, as you yourself still do,
Within the eye of honour,[41] be assured,
My purse, my person, my extremest means
Lie all unlock'd to your occasions.

Bass. In my school-days, when I had lost one shaft,
I shot his fellow of the self-same flight[42]
The self-same way with more advised[43] watch,
To find the other forth; and, by adventuring both,
I oft found both. I urge this childhood proof,[44]
Because what follows is pure innocence.
I owe you much, and, like a wilful youth,[45]
That which I owe is lost; but, if you please

[38] Continuance *of*.

[39] Complain of being cut off from.

[40] Pledged.

[41] Within the range of what might be regarded honorable.

[42] Flight was a technical term denoting the distance an arrow was supposed to carry accurately.

[43] More careful or more deliberate.

[44] Experiment in childhood.

[45] Like what will happen to a youthful spendthrift.

To shoot another arrow that self[46] way
Which you did shoot the first, I do not doubt,—
As I will watch the aim,—or to find both,
Or[47] bring your latter hazard back again,
And thankfully rest debtor for the first.

Anto. You know me well, and herein spend but time
To wind about my love with circumstance;[48]
And out of doubt you do me now more wrong
In making question[49] of my uttermost,
Than if you had made waste of all I have:
Then, do but say to me what I should do,
That in your knowledge may by me be done,
And I am prest[50] unto it: therefore speak.

Bass. In Belmont is a lady richly left;[51]
And she is fair, and, fairer than that word,[52]
Of wondrous virtues: sometimes[53] from her eyes
I did receive fair speechless messages.
Her name is Portia; nothing undervalued[54]
To Cato's daughter, Brutus Portia:[55]
Nor is the wide world ignorant of her worth;

[46] Self-same direction.

[47] *Or . . . or* means *either . . . or.*

[48] Round about talking, instead of coming directly to the point. Circumlocution.

[49] In doubting my readiness to do my utmost.

[50] Ready. From Latin *præsto.*

[51] Heir to great riches.

[52] She possesses qualities of character greater than mere beauty.

[53] Formerly, in past time. "Our sometime sister," Hamlet, I., 2. "Ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh . . . . " Eph. 2:13.

[54] In no wise inferior.

[55] A prominent character in the play Julius Caesar.

For the four winds blow in from every coast
Renowned suitors; and her sunny locks
Hang on her temples like a golden fleece;
Which makes her seat of Belmont Colchos' strand,
And many Jasons come in quest of her.[56]
O my Antonio! had I but the means
To hold a rival place with[57] one of them,
I have a mind presages[58] me such thrift,[59]
That I should questionless be fortunate.

Anto. Thou know'st that all my fortunes are at sea;
Neither have I money, nor commodity[60]
To raise a present sum: therefore go forth;
Try what my credit can in Venice do:
That shall be rack'd, even to the uttermost,
To furnish thee to Belmont, to fair Portia.
Go, presently[61] inquire, and so will I,
Where money is; and I no question make,
To have it of my trust, or for my sake.[62]

[*Exeunt.*

[56] An allusion to Jason and the Argonauts in search of the Golden Fleece. The Argonauts were the fifty heroes who sailed to Colchis in the Argo, under command of Jason, to bring back the Golden Fleece. The Golden Fleece was a ram's hide, white, purple, or golden given to Phryxus, who carried it to Colchis where he was entertained by King Aeetes. In honor of his guest, the King hung the Golden Fleece in the Grove of Mars, where it was taken by the Greeks.

[57] As.

[58] *Which* presages.

[59] Success.

[60] Property, or security.

[61] At once.

[62] "Of obtaining it either on my credit as a merchant, or as a personal favor."—Rolfe.

SCENE II.—*Belmont. A Room in* PORTIA'S *House.*

Enter PORTIA *and* NERISSA.

Portia. By my troth,[1] Nerissa, my little body is a-weary of this great world.

Nerissa. You would be, sweet madam, if your miseries were in the same abundance as your good fortunes are: and yet, for aught I see, they are as sick that surfeit with too much, as they that starve with nothing. It is no small[2] happiness, therefore, to be seated in the mean: superfluity comes sooner by white hairs,[3] but competency lives longer.

Portia. Good sentences,[4] and well pronounced.

Neris. They would be better, if well followed.

Portia. If to do were as easy as to know what were good to do, chapels had been churches, and poor men's cottages princes' palaces. It is a good divine that follows his own instructions: I can easier teach twenty what were good to be done, than be one of the twenty to follow mine own teaching. The brain may devise laws for the blood;[5] but a hot temper leaps o'er a cold decree: such a hare is madness the youth, to skip o'er the meshes of good-counsel the cripple. But this reasoning[6] is not in the fashion to choose me a husband. O me, the word *choose!* I may neither choose whom I would, nor

[1] Truth.

[2] Mean.

[3] The wealthy who indulge in extravagant living sooner grow old.

[4] Maxims, precepts, proverbial sayings.

[5] The intellect may devise rules of conduct.

[6] Conversation.

refuse whom I dislike; so is the will of a living daughter curb'd by the will[7] of a dead father. Is it not hard, Nerissa, that I cannot choose one, nor refuse none?

Neris. Your father was ever virtuous; and holy[8] men at their death have good inspirations: therefore, the lottery that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver, and lead—whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you—will no doubt never be chosen by any rightly, but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

Portia. I pray thee over-name them;[9] and, as thou namest them, I will describe them; and, according to my description, level at[10] my affection.

Neris. First, there is the Neapolitan Prince.

Portia. Ay, that's a colt[11] indeed, for he doth nothing but talk of his horse; and he makes it a great appropriation[12] to his own good parts, that he can shoe him himself.

Neris. Then is there the County Palatine.[13]

Portia. He doth nothing but frown; as who should say, *If you will not have me, choose.* He hears merry tales, and smiles not: I fear he will prove the weeping

[7] By what she inherited from her dead father.

[8] Pure, just, upright.

[9] Name them over.

[10] Aim at, guess.

[11] "Wild, dashing, skittish youngster."—Hudson.

[12] Takes great credit to himself, that he can shoe his own horse.

[13] Thought to be an allusion to Count Albertus Alasco, a Polish nobleman, who was in London in 1583, shortly before this play was written.

philosopher[14] when he grows old, being so full of unmannerly sadness in his youth. I had rather be married to a death's-head[15] with a bone in his mouth than to either of these. God defend me from these two!

Neris. How say you by[16] the French lord, Monsieur le Bon?

Portia. God made him, and therefore let him pass for a man. In truth, I know it is a sin to be a mocker: but he! why, he hath a horse better than the Neapolitan's; a better bad habit of frowning than the Count Palatine: he is every man in no man: if a throstle sing, he falls straight a-capering; he will fence[17] with his own shadow. If I should marry him, I should marry twenty husbands. If he would[18] despise me, I would forgive him; for, if he love me to madness, I shall never requite him.

Neris. What say you then to Falconbridge, the young baron of England?

Portia. You know I say nothing to him; for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian;[19] and you will come into the court

[14] A reference to Heraclitus of Ephesus. He lived in a mountain-retreat far away from people. He was called "the weeping philosopher" because he constantly bemoaned the wickedness of mankind. In contrast with him was Democritus, "the laughing philosopher," who laughed at the sins and follies of the race.

[15] A naked human skull symbolizing death.

[16] What do you say of ?

[17] Defend himself with his sword against his own shadow.

[18] Should.

[19] "Authors are not much in the habit of satirizing themselves; and yet, according to Farmer and his school, Shakespeare knew 'neither Latin, French, nor Italian.'"—Knight.

and swear that I have a poor penny-worth in the English.[20] He is a proper[21] man's picture; but, alas, who can converse with a dumbshow?[22] How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet[23] in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere.

Neris. What think you of the Scottish lord, his neighbour?

Portia. That he hath a neighbourly charity in him; for he borrowed a box of the ear of the Englishman, and swore he would pay him again when he was able: I think the Frenchman became his surety, and seal'd under for another.[24]

Neris. How like you the young German, the Duke of Saxony's nephew?[25]

Portia. Very vilely in the morning when he is sober, and most vilely in the afternoon when he is drunk: when he is best, he is a little worse than a man; and when he is

[20] I know very little English.

[21] Handsome, well-proportioned, fine appearing.

[22] A *tableau*, or pantomime. Called *dumb* because exhibited to the eye only.

[23] The *doublet* was a close-fitting coat, with short skirts. *Round hose* were trousers reaching to the knee. *Bonnet*, originally the name of a material, later applied to a man's *cap* made of the material.

[24] *To seal under* is to become surety. A person *sealed* to, or *subscribed* to, a bond. His surety *sealed under*. The Frenchman has, therefore, become surety for a "box of the ear" to be paid by the Scott to the Englishman in return for the one borrowed.

[25] The Duke of Bavaria visited London and was made a Knight of the Garter in Shakespeare's time. In this enumeration of Portia's suitors, Shakespeare is thought to have covertly alluded to those of Queen Elizabeth.

worst, he is little better than a beast. An[26] the worst fall that ever fell, I hope I shall make shift to go without him.

Neris. If he should offer to choose, and choose the right casket, you should refuse to perform your father's will, if you should refuse to accept him.

Portia. Therefore, for fear of the worst, I pray thee, set a deep glass of Rhenish wine on the contrary[27] cas- 90
ket; for, if the Devil be within, and that temptation without, I know he will choose it. I will do any thing, Nerissa, ere I will be married to a sponge.

Neris. You need not fear, lady, the having any of these lords: they have acquainted me with their determinations; which is, indeed, to return to their home, and to trouble you with no more suit, unless you may be won by some other sort[28] than your father's imposition,[29] depending on the caskets.

Portia. If I live to be as old as Sibylla,[30] I will die as 100
chaste as Diana,[31] unless I be obtained by the manner of my father's will. I am glad this parcel of wooers are so reasonable; for there is not one among them but I dote

[26] If.

[27] Wrong.

[28] Chance or lot.

[29] Conditions imposed by the father's will.

[30] The Cumæan Sibyl, named from Cumæ, Italy, where she lived. Apollo fell in love with her, and offered to grant any request she might make. Her request was that she might live as many years as she held grains of sand in her hand.

[31] Goddess of hunting and chastity. She was the sister of Apollo, and daughter of Jupiter and Latona. She was worshipped in three different ways. As a celestial goddess, she was called Luna; as a terrestrial divinity, Diana or Dictynna; and in the infernal regions, Hecate.

on his very absence; and I pray God grant them a fair departure.

Neris. Do you not remember, lady, in your father's time, a Venetian, a scholar, and a soldier, that came hither in company of the Marquess of Montferrat?

Portia. Yes, yes; it was Bassanio: as I think, so was he call'd.

Neris. True, madam: he, of all the men that ever my foolish eyes look'd upon, was the best deserving a fair lady.

Portia. I remember him well; and I remember him worthy of thy praise.—

Enter a Servant.

How now! what news?

Serv. The four strangers[32] seek for you, madam, to take their leave: and there is a forerunner come from a fifth, the Prince of Morocco; who brings word, the Prince his master will be here to-night.

Portia. If I could bid the fifth welcome with so good heart as I can bid the other four farewell, I should be glad of his approach: if he have the condition[33] of a saint and the complexion of a devil, I had rather he should shrive[34] me than wive me.

Come, Nerissa.—Sirrah, go before.—

Whiles we shut the gate upon one wooer, another knocks at the door. [*Exeunt.*

[32] Six lords and Bassanio have been mentioned already.

[33] Nature, disposition.

[34] To absolve from sins—"referring to the priestly act of confession and absolution."

SCENE III.—*Venice. A Public Place.*

Enter BASSANIO *and* SHYLOCK.

Shylock. Three thousand ducats,[1]—well.[2]

Bass. Ay, sir, for three months.

Shy. For three months,—well.

Bass. For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.[3]

Shy. Antonio shall become bound,—well.

Bass. May you stead me?[4] Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your answer?

Shy. Three thousand ducats for three months, and Antonio bound.

Bass. Your answer to that.

Shy. Antonio is a good[5] man.

Bass. Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

Shy. Ho! no, no, no, no: my meaning, in saying he is a good man, is to have you understand me that he is sufficient. Yet his means are in supposition:[6] he hath an argosy bound to Tripolis,[7] another to the

[1] The Venetian ducat is equivalent in value to $1.53 of our money.

[2] *Well* carries something of interrogative force though as much an exclamation as a question. It also has something of the meaning "proceed."

[3] Under bond.

[4] Can you aid me?

[5] Man of excellent business credit.

[6] Doubtful because risked at sea.

[7] Tripoli in Syria, formerly a seaport of great commercial importance.

Indies; I understand moreover upon the Rialto,[8] he hath a third to Mexico, a fourth for England, and other ventures he hath, squandered[9] abroad. But ships are but boards, sailors but men: there be land-rats and water-rats, land-thieves and water-thieves,—I mean, pirates: and then there is the peril of waters, winds, and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding, sufficient. Three thousand ducats;—I think I may take his bond.

Bass. Be assured you may.

Shy. I will be assured I may; and, that I may be assured, I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

Bass. If it please you to dine with us.

Shy. Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation[10] which your prophet the Nazarite conjured the Devil into.[11] I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you. What news on the Rialto?—Who is he comes here?

[8] The great Merchant's Exchange building in Venice. Concerning the place meant, Rogers thus speaks in one of the notes to his poem on Italy: "Rialto is the name, not of the bridge, but of the island from which it is called; and the Venetians say *il ponte di Rialto*, as we say Westminster-bridge. In that island is the exchange; and I have often walked there as on classic ground. In the days of Antonio and Bassanio it was second to none."

[9] Scattered.

[10] Body, or flesh.

[11] Christ suffered the legion of devils to depart from the afflicted man and to enter into the swine.—Luke 8:27–33.

Enter ANTONIO.

Bass. This is Signior Antonio.

Shy. [*Aside.*] How like a fawning publican[12] he looks!
I hate him for[13] he is a Christian;
But more, for that in low simplicity
He lends out money gratis, and brings down
The rate of usance[14] here with us in Venice.
If I can catch him once upon the hip,[15]
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.
He hates our sacred nation; and he rails,
Even there where merchants most do congregate,
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,
Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,
If I forgive him!

Bass. Shylock, do you hear?

Shy. I am debating of[16] my present store;
And, by the near guess of my memory,
I cannot instantly raise up the gross[17]
Of full three thousand ducats. What of that?
Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe,
Will furnish me. But, soft![18] how many months

[12] A collector of taxes, regarded by the Jews with the greatest detestation.

[13] Because.

[14] Usance, usury, interest are synonyms. Those who loaned money out at interest were especially despised because they were regarded as guilty of violating the Biblical principle, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."

[15] To get the advantage of, as in wrestling.

[16] Concerning.

[17] Sum total.

[18] *Wait! Not so fast!*

Do you desire?—[*To* Anto.] Rest you fair,[19] good signior!
Your Worship[20] was the last man in our mouths.

Anto. Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow,
By taking nor by giving of excess,[21]
Yet, to supply the ripe wants[22] of my friend,
I'll break a custom.—Is he yet possess'd[23]
How much we would?[24]

Shy. Ay, ay, three thousand ducats.

Anto. And for three months.

Shy. I had forgot;—three months; you told me so.
Well then, your bond; and, let me see,—But here you:
Methought[25] you said you neither lend nor borrow
Upon advantage.

Anto. I do never use it.

Shy. When Jacob grazed his uncle Laban's sheep,—
This Jacob from our holy Abraham was
(As his wise mother wrought in his behalf)
The third possessor; ay, he was the third,—[26]

Anto. And what of him? did he take interest?

Shy. No, not take interest; not, as you would say,
Directly interest: mark what Jacob did,
When Laban and himself were compromised[27]

[19] A form of greeting commonly used in Shakespeare's day, probably meaning here "Heaven grant you fair fortune!"

[20] A common title of deference.

[21] Interest.

[22] Wants that must be satisfied at once.

[23] Informed.

[24] Require.

[25] It seemed to me.

[26] Read Genesis 27 and 30.

[27] Had mutually agreed.

That all the eanlings[28] which were streak'd and pied[29]
Should fall as Jacob's hire.
This was a way to thrive, and he was blest;
And thrift is blessing, if men steal it not.
Anto. This was a venture;[30] sir, that Jacob served for;
A thing not in his power to bring to pass,
But sway'd and fashion'd by the hand of Heaven.
Was this inserted[31] to make interest good?
Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?
Shy. I cannot tell; I make it breed[32] as fast.
But note me, signior.
Anto. Mark you this, Bassanio,
The Devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.[33]
An evil soul, producing holy witness,
Is like a villain with a smiling cheek,
A goodly apple rotten at the heart:
O, what a godly outside falsehood[34] hath!
Shy. Three thousand ducats;—'tis a good round sum.
Three months from twelve,—then, let me see, the rate—
Anto. Well, Shylock, shall we be beholding[35] to you?
Shy. Signior Antonio, many a time and oft,[36]
In the Rialto, you have rated me

[28] New-born lambs.
[29] Spotted.
[30] A risk.
[31] Was this inserted in Scripture to justify usury?
[32] Bear interest.
[33] See Matt. 4: 4, 6.
[34] Knavery.
[35] Indebted.
[36] Many and many a time.

About my moneys, and my usances:
Still have I borne it with a patient shrug;
For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
You call me misbeliever, cut-throat, dog,
And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine,[37]
And all for use of that which is mine own.
Well then, it now appears you need my help:
Go to,[38] then; you come to me, and you say,
Shylock, we would have moneys: you say so;
You, that did void your rheum[39] upon my beard,
And foot me as you spurn a stranger cur
Over your threshold: moneys is your suit.
What should I say to you? Should I not say,
Hath a dog money? is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats? or
Shall I bend low, and in a bondman's key,
With 'bated breath and whispering humbleness,
Say this,—
Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn'd me such a day; another time
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys?
Anto. I am as like to call thee so again,
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friend;—for when did friendship take
A breed[40] of barren metal of his friend?—

[37] A long, coarse outer garment.
[38] Here used scornfully.
[39] "Eject your spittle."
[40] *Breed* is money *bred* from the principal, or interest. See note 32.

But lend it rather to thine enemy;
Who if he break,[41] thou mayst with better face
Exact the penalty.

Shy. Why, look you, how you storm!
I would be friends with you, and have your love,
Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,
Supply your present wants, and take no doit[42]
Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me:
This is kind I offer.

Anto. This were kindness.

Shy. This kindness will I show: 140
Go with me to a notary, seal me there
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport,[43]
If you repay me not on such a day,
In such a place, such sum or sums as are
Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit
Be nominated for an equal pound
Of your fair flesh,[44] to be cut off and taken
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

[41] Fail to meet his engagement.

[42] *Doit*, a small Dutch coin worth about a quarter of a cent.

[43] In the old ballad of Gernutus, the Jew says:

"But we will have a merry jest,
for to be talked long:
You shall make me a Band (quoth he)
that shall be large and strong.
And this shall be the forfeyture,
of your own Flesh a pound;
If you agree, make you the Band,
and here is a hundred Crownes."

[44] "Let the forfeit named as an equivalent be a pound of your flesh."—Rolfe.

Anto. Content, in faith; I'll seal to such a bond,
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.
Bass. You shall not seal to such a bond for me:
I'll rather dwell[45] in my necessity.
Anto. Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it:
Within these two months, that's a month before
This bond expires, I do expect return
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.
Shy. O, father Abraham, what these Christians are,
Whose own hard dealing teaches them suspect
The thoughts of others!—Pray you, tell me this:
If he should break his day,[46] what should I gain
By the exaction of the forfeiture?
A pound of man's flesh taken from a man
Is not so estimable, profitable neither,
As flesh of muttons, beefs, or goats. I say,
To buy his favour I extend this friendship:
If he will take it, so;[47] if not, adieu;
And, for my love, I pray you wrong me not.
Anto. Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.
Shy. Then meet me forthwith at the notary's:
Give him direction for this merry bond,
And I will go and purse the ducats straight;[48]
See to my house, left in the fearful guard
Of an unthrifty knave,[49] and presently
I will be with you. [*Exit.*

[45] Continue.
[46] Break his contract.
[47] *So* is here used for *so be it.*
[48] Immediately.
[49] Untrustworthy rogue.

Anto. Hie thee, gentle Jew.
The Hebrew will turn Christian; he grows kind.
Bass. I like not fair terms and a villain's mind.
Anto. Come on: in this there can be no dismay;
My ships come home a month before the day.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Belmont. A Room in* PORTIA'S *House.*

Flourish of Cornets. Enter the Prince of MOROCCO, *and his Train;* PORTIA, NERISSA, *and other of her* Attendants.

Morocco. Mislike[1] me not for my complexion,
The shadow'd livery of the burning Sun,
To whom I am a neighbour, and near bred.
Bring me the fairest creature northward born,
Where Phœbus'[2] fire scarce thaws the icicles,
And let us make incision for your love,
To prove whose blood is reddest,[3] his or mine.
I tell thee, lady, this aspéct of mine
Hath fear'd[4] the valiant: by my love I swear,

[1] Dislike.

[2] A name of Apollo, signifying light and life; here the sun.

[3] *Red blood* was a traditionary sign of courage. In Act III., Scene II., Bassanio talks of cowards who "have livers white as milk."

[4] Caused to fear, terrified.

The best-regarded virgins of our clime
Have loved it too. I would not change this hue,
Except to steal your thoughts,[5] my gentle queen.
Portia. In terms of choice I am not solely led
By nice direction of a maiden's eyes;[6]
Besides, the lottery of my destiny[7]
Bars me the right of voluntary choosing:
But, if my father had not scanted me,[8]
And hedged me by his will, to yield myself
His wife who wins me by that means I told you,
Yourself, renownèd Prince, then stood as fair
As any comer I have look'd on yet
For my affection.
Moroc. Even for that I thank you:
Therefore, I pray you, lead me to the caskets,
To try my fortune. By this scimitar,—
That slew the Sophy,[9] and a Persian prince
That won three fields of Sultan Solyman,[10]—
I would outstare the sternest eyes that look,
Outbrave the heart most daring on the Earth,
Pluck the young sucking cubs from the she-bear,
Yea, mock the lion when he roars for prey,
To win thee, lady. But, alas the while![11]

[5] As a thief in disguise.

[6] Dainty estimation of maidenly emotion.

[7] Conditions of her father's will.

[8] Restricted me.

[9] Common name of the Shahs of Persia, according to a contemporary history. Originally the word was *Soffi*, a wise man.

[10] Solyman the Magnificent was ingloriously defeated by the Persians in the campaign of 1535.

[11] "Alack a day," or even the same as the indefinite "alas!"

If Hercules and Lichas[12] play at dice[13]
Which is the better man, the greater throw
May turn by fortune from the weaker hand:
So is Alcides[14] beaten by his page;
And so may I, blind Fortune leading me,
Miss that which one unworthier may attain,
And die with grieving.

Portia. You must take your chance;
And either not attempt to choose at all,
Or swear, before you choose, if you choose wrong
Never to speak to lady afterward
In way of marriage; therefore be advised.[15]

Moroc. Nor will not. Come, bring me unto my chance.

Portia. First, forward to the temple:[16] after dinner
Your hazard shall be made.

Moroc. Good fortune then!
To make me blest or cursed'st among men.

[*Exeunt.*

[12] Hercules was the son of Jupiter and Alcmena. His master, Eurystheus, gave him what were thought to be twelve impossible tasks now known as the "Twelve Labors of Hercules." Lichas was the servant of Hercules who brought his master the mystic poisoned tunic of Nessus, the centaur, from Dejanira. Hercules immediately put on the garment, but in doing so, brought on an illness from which he never recovered.

[13] Supply *to determine* after *dice.*

[14] Hercules was a descendant of Alceus hence originally called Alcides.

[15] Cautious or considerate.

[16] The church, where the oath just previously mentioned had to be taken.

Scene II.—*Venice. A Street.*

Enter Launcelot Gobbo.

Launcelot. Certainly my conscience will serve me to run from this Jew my master. The fiend is at mine elbow, and tempts me, saying to me, *Gobbo, Launcelot Gobbo, good Launcelot,* or *good Gobbo,* or *good Launcelot Gobbo, use your legs, take the start, run away.* My conscience says, *No; take heed, honest Launcelot; take heed, honest Gobbo,* or, as aforesaid, *honest Launcelot Gobbo; do not run; scorn running with thy heels.*[1] Well, the most courageous fiend bids me pack: *Via!*[2] says the fiend; *away!* says the fiend; *for the Heavens,*[3] *rouse up a brave mind,* says the fiend, *and run.* Well, my conscience, hanging about the neck of my heart, says very wisely to me, *My honest friend Launcelot, being an honest man's son,*—or rather an honest woman's son; for, indeed, my father did something smack, something grow to, he had a kind of taste;—well, my conscience says, *Launcelot, budge not. Budge,* says the fiend: *budge not,* says my conscience. Conscience, say I, you counsel well; fiend, say I, you counsel well: to be ruled by my conscience, I should stay with the Jew my master, who, God bless the mark![4] is a kind of devil; and, to run away from the Jew, I should be ruled by the fiend, who, saving your

[1] "To scorn a thing *with the heels*" meant *to spurn* or *to kick at.* See also *Much Ado About Nothing,* III., 4.

[2] *Via.* From the Italian,—*away!*

[3] *For Heaven's sake.*

[4] *God save the mark!* An expression of obscure origin but used as an apology for some profane or vulgar word.

reverence,[5] is the Devil himself. Certainly the Jew is the very Devil incarnation;[6] and, in my conscience, my conscience is but a kind of hard conscience, to offer to counsel me to stay with the Jew. The fiend gives the more friendly counsel: I will run, fiend; my heels are at your commandment; I will run.

Enter old GOBBO, *with a basket.*

Gobbo. Master young man, you, I pray you, which is the way to Master Jew's? 30

Laun. [*Aside.*] O Heavens, this is my true-begotten father! who, being more than sand-blind,[7] high-gravel-blind,[8] knows me not. I will try confusions[9] with him.

Gob. Master young gentleman, I pray you, which is the way to Master Jew's?

Laun. Turn up on your right hand at the next turning, but, at the next turning of all, on your left; marry,[10] at the very next turning turn of no hand, but turn down indirectly to the Jew's house.

Gob. By God's sonties,[11] 'twill be a hard way to hit. 40 Can you tell me whether one Launcelot, that dwells with him, dwell with him or no?

[5] *Salvia reverentia!* Apologetic like *God save the mark!*

[6] Incarnate.

[7] Dim of sight, as if there were sand in the eye, or floating before it.

[8] Launcelot's *high-gravel-blind* is an exaggeration of *sand-blind. Stone-blind* is used of total blindness.

[9] Experiments.

[10] *Indeed! Marry* was a corruption of *Mary.* It was originally a mode of swearing by the Virgin Mary. The expression had lost its original force in Shakespeare's day.

[11] Saints.

Laun. Talk you of young Master Launcelot?—[*Aside.*] Mark me now; now will I raise the waters.[12]—[*To him.*] Talk you of young Master Launcelot?

Gob. No *master*,[13] sir, but a poor man's son: his father, though I say it, is an honest exceeding poor man, and, God be thanked, well to live.[14]

Laun. Well, let his father be what 'a will, we talk of young Master Launcelot.

Gob. Your Worship's friend, and Launcelot, sir.

Laun. But I pray you, *ergo*,[15] old man, *ergo*, I beseech you, talk you of young Master Launcelot?

Gob. Of Launcelot, an't please your mastership.

Laun. *Ergo*, Master Launcelot. Talk not of Master Launcelot, father[16]; for the young gentleman—according to Fates and Destinies, and such odd sayings, the Sisters Three,[17] and such branches of learning—is, indeed, deceased; or, as you would say in plain terms, gone to Heaven.

Gob. Marry, God forbid! the boy was the very staff of my age, my very prop.

Laun. [*Aside.*] Do I look like a cudgel, or a hovel-post, a staff, or a prop?—[*To him.*] Do you not know me, father?

[12] I will have some fun with him.

[13] A title of respect belonging to one of the rank of gentleman.

[14] Equivalent to our common phrase, *well off*.

[15] Therefore; consequently;—often used in a jocular way.

[16] The peasantry used to call all old people *father* or *mother*.

[17] The Three Fates which controled the destinies of all human beings: Clotho, who held the distaff which spun the thread of life; Lachesis, who turned the spindle and measured the thread; and Atropos, who cut the thread with the fatal shears.

Gob. Alack the day, I know you not, young gentleman: but, I pray you, tell me, is my boy—God rest his soul!—alive, or dead?

Laun. Do you not know me, father?

Gob. Alack, sir, I am sand-blind; I know you not.

Laun. Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of the knowing me: it is a wise father that knows his own child. Well, old man, I will tell you news of your son: [*Kneels, with his back to him.*] give me your blessing. Truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long,—a man's son may; but, in the end, truth will out.

Gob. Pray you, sir, stand up: I am sure you are not Launcelot, my boy.

Laun. Pray you, let's have no more fooling about it, but give me your blessing: I am Launcelot, your boy that was, your son that is, your child that shall be.[18]

Gob. I cannot think you are my son.

Laun. I know not what I shall think of that: but I am Launcelot, the Jew's man; and I am sure Margery your wife is my mother.

Gob. Her name is Margery indeed: I'll be sworn, if thou be Launcelot, thou art mine own flesh and blood. [*Taking hold of his back hair.*] Lord worshipp'd might He be![19] what a beard hast thou got! thou hast got

[18] Launcelot, in native jest, has probably contorted his statement rather meaning "your child that was, your boy that is, your son that shall be."

[19] He might be a Lord Worshipful, meaning that he has beard enough to receive the title of Lord. "Stage tradition has the old man mistake the hair on Launcelot's head for a beard."—Staunton.

more hair on thy chin than Dobbin my fill-horse[20] has on his tail.

Laun. [*Rising.*] It should seem, then, that Dobbin's tail grows backward: I am sure he had more hair of[21] his tail than I have of my face, when I last saw him.

Gob. Lord, how art thou changed! How dost thou and thy master agree? I have brought him a present. How 'gree you now?

Laun. Well, well; but, for mine own part, as I have set up my rest[22] to run away, so I will not rest till I have run some ground. My master's a very Jew: give him a present! give him a halter: I am famish'd in his service; you may tell every finger I have with my ribs. Father, I am glad you are come: give me your present to one Master Bassanio, who indeed gives rare new liveries: if I serve not him, I will run as far as God has any ground.[23]—O, rare fortune! here comes the man: to him, father; for I am a Jew, if I serve the Jew any longer.

Enter Bassanio, *with* Leonardo *and other Followers.*

Bass. You may do so; but let it be so hasted, that supper be ready at the farthest by five of the clock. See

[20] *Fill-horse,* for *shaft-horse.* Fill was a common form of *thill,* shaft.

[21] On.

[22] Determined, or made up the mind to, resolved. The expression is taken from play in which the highest stake played for was called the *rest.*

[23] Especially significant in Venice where people lived upon the water, and where the main land was consequently regarded with admiration. It was not easy to find ground enough in Venice to run far upon.

these letters delivered; put the liveries to making; and desire Gratiano to come anon[24] to my lodging.

[*Exit a* Servant.

Laun. To him, father.

Gob. God bless your Worship!

Bass. Gramercy![25] Wouldst thou aught with me?

Gob. Here's my son, sir, a poor boy,—

Laun. Not a poor boy, sir, but the rich Jew's man, that would, sir,—as my father shall specify,—

Gob. He hath a great infection,[26] sir, as one would say, to serve,—

Laun. Indeed, the short and the long is, I serve the Jew, and I have a desire—as my father shall specify,—

Gob. His master and he—saving your Worship's reverence—are scarce cater-cousins,[27]—

Laun. To be brief, the very truth is, that the Jew having done me wrong doth cause me—as my father, being, I hope, an old man, shall frutify[28] unto you,—

Gob. I have here a dish of doves[29] that I would bestow upon your Worship; and my suit is,—

Laun. In very brief, the suit is impertinent[30] to myself, as your Worship shall know by this honest old

[24] At once.

[25] *Great thanks!* A colloquial form of the French *grand merci.*

[26] Inclination. An honest blunder of old Gobbo.

[27] His master and he do not agree very well, have not much in common. The term *cater-cousins* is thought by some to be derived from *quatre-cousins,* or fourth cousins.

[28] Fructify, meaning here *to set forth in speech,* to explain.

[29] A present of doves was not uncommon in Italy.

[30] *Pertinent.* Another blunder.

man; and, though I say it, though old man, yet, poor man, my father.

Bass. One speak for both.—What would you?

Laun. Serve you, sir.

Gob. That is the very defect[31] of the matter, sir.

Bass. I know thee well; thou hast obtain'd thy suit:
Shylock thy master spoke with me this day,
And hath preferr'd[32] thee; if it be preferment[33]
To leave a rich Jew's service, to become
The follower of so poor a gentleman.

Laun. The old proverb is very well parted between my master Shylock and you, sir: you have the grace of God, sir, and he hath enough.[34]

Bass. Thou speak'st it well.—Go, father, with thy son.—Take leave of thy old master, and inquire
My lodging out.—[*To his followers.*] Give him a livery
More guarded[35] than his fellows'; see it done.

Laun. Father, in. I cannot get a service, no; I have ne'er a tongue in my head.—Well, [*Looking on his palm*] if any man in Italy have a fairer table![36] which doth offer to swear upon a book, I shall have good fortune![37]

[31] *Effect.*

[32] *Recommended.*

[33] Promotion. *To prefer* has these two meanings in the passage.

[34] The old proverb seems to have been in substance: *He that hath the Grace of God hath enough.*

[35] More richly ornamented. Guards were trimmings or broidered edgings which protected the cloth from wear.

[36] Palm of the hand.

[37] Launcelot, applauding himself for his success with Bassanio, looks into the palm of his hand, which by fortune-tellers is called the table. He sees there the sign of good fortune.

Go to; here's a simple line of life![38] here's a small trifle of wives! Alas, fifteen wives is nothing! aleven[39] widows and nine maids is a simple coming-in for one man: and then to 'scape drowning thrice; and to be in peril of my life with the edge of a feather-bed;[40]—here are simple 'scapes![41] Well, if Fortune be a woman, she's a good wench for this gear.[42]—Father, come; I'll take my leave of the Jew in the twinkling of an eye.[43]

[*Exeunt* LAUNCELOT *and old* GOBBO.

Bass. I pray thee, good Leonardo, think on this:
These things being bought and orderly bestow'd,[44]
Return in haste, for I do feast to-night
My best-esteem'd acquaintance: hie thee;[45] go.

Leon. My best endeavours shall be done herein.

Enter GRATIANO.

Gratiano. Where is your master?

Leonardo. Yonder, sir, he walks. [*Exit.*

[38] Palmistry, or chiromancy, was generally believed in by many intelligent people as well as by the less educated. In 1558, John Indagne published a book on Palmistry, or *Manual Divination*, which was generally credited by the English reading public. In palmistry, *the table line*, or *line of fortune*, is the one running from the root of the forefinger to the side of the hand. The *line of life* is the one which encircles the ball of the thumb. The *natural line* runs through the middle of the palm.

[39] "A vulgarism for *eleven*,—formerly not uncommon."—Dyce.

[40] A ludicrous variation of "the edge of the sword."

[41] Launcelot here proves himself expert in reading his own fortune.

[42] Stuff, nonsense.

[43] *Of an eye* is found only in Robert's quarto edition of the play.

[44] *Disposed of*. *Bestowed* is now obsolete in this sense.

[45] *Hasten thee, make haste.*

Grati. Signior Bassanio,—
Bass. Gratiano!
Grati. I have a suit to you.
Bass. You have obtain'd it.
Grati. Nay, you must not deny me: I must go
With you to Belmont.
Bass. Why, then you must. But hear thee, Gratiano:
Thou art too wild, too rude, and bold of voice;
Parts that become thee happily enough,
And in such eyes as ours appear not faults;
But where thou art not known, why, there they show
Something too liberal.[46] Pray thee, take pain[47]
T' allay with some cold drops of modesty
Thy skipping spirit;[48] lest, through thy wild behaviour,
I be misconstrued in the place I go to,
And lose my hopes.
Grati. Signior Bassanio, hear me:
If I do not put on a sober habit,
Talk with respect, and swear but now and then,
Wear prayer-books in my pocket, look demurely;
Nay, more, while grace is saying, hood mine eyes
Thus with my hat,[49] and sigh, and say amen;
Use all th' observance of civility,
Like one well-studied in a sad ostent[50]
To please his grandam, never trust me more.

[46] Free, reckless, beyond the bounds of good behavior
[47] Now *take pains.*
[48] Thy frolicsome humour.
[49] People wore hats at dinner, holding them over their eyes while grace was said.
[50] Show of serious behaviour.

Bass. Well, we shall see your bearing.
Grati. Nay, but I bar[51] to-night; you shall not gauge[52] me
By what we do to-night.
Bass. No, that were pity:
I would entreat you rather to put on
Your boldest suit of mirth, for we have friends
That purpose merriment. But fare you well:
I have some business.
Grati. And I must to Lorenzo and the rest;
But we will visit you at supper-time. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Same. A Room in* SHYLOCK'S *House.*

Enter JESSICA *and* LAUNCELOT.

Jessica. I'm sorry thou wilt leave my father so:
Our house is hell, and thou, a merry devil,
Didst rob it of some taste of tediousness.
But fare thee well; there is a ducat for thee:
And, Launcelot, soon at[1] supper shalt thou see
Lorenzo, who is thy new master's guest:
Give him this letter; do it secretly;
And so farewell: I would not have my father
See me in talk with thee.

[51] Except.
[52] *Estimate me,* or *judge me.*

[1] *About.* Comedy of Errors, I., 2: "*Soon at* five o'clock I'll meet with you upon the mart."

Laun. Adieu; tears exhibit[2] my tongue. Most beautiful pagan, most sweet Jew! These foolish drops do somewhat drown my manly spirit: adieu!

Jess. Farewell, good Launcelot.—

[*Exit* Launcelot.

Alack, what heinous sin is it in me
To be ashamed to be my father's child!
But, though I am a daughter to his blood,
I am not to his manners.—O Lorenzo,
If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife,
Become a Christian, and thy loving wife! [*Exit.*

Scene IV.—*The Same. A Street.*

Enter Gratiano, Lorenzo, Salarino, *and* Solanio.

Loren. Nay, we will slink away in supper-time,
Disguise us at my lodging, and return
All in an hour.

Grati. We have not made good preparation.

Salar. We have not spoke us yet of torch-bearers.[1]

Solan. 'Tis vile, unless it may be quaintly[2] order'd,
And better, in my mind, not undertook.

Loren. 'Tis now but four o'clock: we have two hours
To furnish us.—

[2] Inhibit. Tears keep my tongue from speaking.

[1] We have not yet engaged our torch-bearers.

[2] Gracefully, or ingeniously.

Enter LAUNCELOT, *with a letter.*

Friend Launcelot, what's the news?

Laun. An[3] it shall please you to break up[4] this, it shall seem to signify.

Loren. I know the hand: in faith, 'tis a fair hand;
And whiter than the paper that it writ on
Is the fair hand that writ.

Grati. Love-news, in faith.

Laun. By your leave, sir.

Loren. Whither goest thou?

Laun. Marry, sir, to bid my old master the Jew to sup to-night with my new master the Christian.

Loren. Hold here, take this. [*Giving him money.*]
Tell gentle Jessica
I will not fail her: speak it privately;
Go. [*Exit* LAUNCELOT.]—Gentlemen,
Will you prepare you for this masque to-night?
I am provided of[5] a torch-bearer.

Salar. Ay, marry, I'll be gone about it straight.

Solan. And so will I.

Loren. Meet me and Gratiano
At Gratiano's lodging some hour hence.

Salar. 'Tis good we do so.

[*Exeunt* SALAR. *and* SOLAN.

Grati. Was not that letter from fair Jessica?

[3] If.
[4] Break open.
[5] With.

Loren. I must needs[6] tell thee all: She hath directed
How I shall take her from her father's house;
What gold and jewels she is furnish'd with;
What page's suit she hath in readiness.
If e'er the Jew her father come to Heaven,
It will be for his gentle daughter's sake;
And never dare misfortune cross her foot,
Unless she do it under this excuse,—
That she is issue to a faithless[7] Jew.
Come, go with me: peruse this, as thou goest.
Fair Jessica shall be my torch-bearer. [*Exeunt.*

Scene V.—*The Same. Before* Shylock's *House.*

Enter Shylock *and* Launcelot.

Shy. Well, thou shalt see, thy eyes shall be thy judge,
The difference of[1] old Shylock and Bassanio:—
What, Jessica!—thou shalt not gormandize,[2]
As thou hast done with me,—What, Jessica![3]—
And sleep and snore, and rend apparel out.—
Why, Jessica, I say!

Laun. Why, Jessica!

Shy. Who bids thee call? I do not bid thee call.

[6] Of necessity.

[7] Unbelieving.

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[1] Between.

[2] Eat like a glutton.

[3] An exclamation of impatience.

Laun. Your Worship was wont to tell me I could do nothing without bidding.

Enter JESSICA.

Jess. Call you? What is your will?

Shy. I am bid forth[4] to supper, Jessica:
There are my keys.—But wherefore should I go?
I am not bid for love; they flatter me:
But yet I'll go in hate, to feed upon
The prodigal[5] Christian.—Jessica, my girl,
Look to my house.—I am right loth to go;
There is some ill a-brewing towards my rest,[6]
For I did dream of money-bags to-night.[7]

Laun. I beseech you, sir, go: my young master doth expect your reproach.[8]

Shy. So do I his.[9]

Laun. And they have conspired together,—I will not say you shall see a masque; but if you do, then it was not for nothing that my nose fell a-bleeding on Black-Monday[10] last at six o'clock i' the morning, fall-

[4] Invited out.

[5] Recklessly extravagant.

[6] Against my peace of mind.

[7] Last night.

[8] Approach—Launcelot's blunder.

[9] He takes Launcelot literally, for he expects Bassanio's *reproach* through the bankruptcy of Antonio.

[10] *Easter-Monday.* How this day was named *Black-Monday* is explained by the old chronicler Stowe: "In the 34th of Edward III., the 14th of April, and the morrow after Easterday, King Edward, with his host, lay before the city of Paris: which day was full dark of mist and hail, and so bitter cold, that many men died on their horses' backs with the cold. Wherefore unto this day it hath been called Black-Monday."

ing out that year on Ash-Wednesday[11] was four year in the afternoon.

Shy. What, are there masques?—Hear you me, Jessica:
Lock up my doors; and when you hear the drum,
And the vile squealing of the wry-neck'd fife,[12]
Clamber not you up to the casements then,
Nor thrust your head into the public street,
To gaze on Christian fools with varnish'd faces;[13]
But stop my house's ears,—I mean my casements;
Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house.—By Jacob's staff,[14] I swear
I have no mind of[15] feasting forth to-night;
But I will go.—Go you before me, sirrah;
Say, I will come.

Laun. I'll go before you, sir.—
Mistress, look out at window for all this;
There will come a Christian by,
Will be worth a Jewess' eye.[16] [*Exit* Laun.

[11] "The first day of Lent,—so called from a custom of the Roman Catholic Church of putting ashes, on that day, upon the foreheads of penitents."—Webster.

[12] It is not clear whether *wry-neck'd fife* refers to the instrument or to the player. Boswell cited a passage from Barnabe Rich (1618): "A fife is a wry-neckt musician, for he always looks away from his instrument." On the other hand, the Old English fife had a bent mouth-piece like the flute of the ancients.

[13] Referring perhaps to painted masks, but really meaning two-faced, treacherous Christians.

[14] Gen. 32:10; Heb. 11.:21. Look up these references.

[15] *For.*

[16] This phrase is a slight alteration of the proverbial expression, "*Worth a Jew's eye.*" The Jews were often threatened with the loss

Shy. What says that fool of Hagar's[17] offspring, ha?
Jess. His words were, *Farewell, mistress;* nothing else.
Shy. The patch[18] is kind enough; but a huge feeder,
Snail-slow in profit, and he sleeps by day
More than the wild-cat. Drones hive not with me;
Therefore I part with him; and part with him
To one that I would have him help to waste
His borrow'd purse.—Well, Jessica, go in:
Perhaps, I will[19] return immediately.
Do as I bid you; shut doors after you:
Fast bind, fast find,—
A proverb never stale in thrifty mind. [*Exit.*
Jess. Farewell; and if my fortune be not crost,
I have a father, you a daughter lost. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI. *The Same.*

Enter GRATIANO *and* SALARINO, *masked.*

Grati. This is the pent-house[1] under which Lorenzo
Desired us to make stand.
Salar. His hour is almost past.

of a tooth or an eye, or with some other mutilation, in order to extort their wealth or treasure from them. A wealthy Jew, in the palmiest days of Jewish persecutions, was often forced to pay his entire treasure to keep from losing an eye.

[17] Mother of the Jewish peoples. See Gen. 16:10.

[18] A professional *jester*. The name was perhaps given because of his patched or many-colored coat. It came to be used generally as a term of contempt like *fool*.

[19] Supply *decide to* after *will*.

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[1] Sloping roof over a door or window.

Grati. And it is marvel he out-dwells his hour,
For lovers ever run before the clock.
Salar. O, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly[2]
To seal love's bonds new-made than they are wont,
To keep obliged faith[3] unforfeited!
Grati. That ever holds. Who riseth from a feast
With that keen appetite that he sits down?
Where is the horse that doth untread again
His tedious measures with th' unbated fire
That he did pace them first? All things that are,
Are with more spirit chasèd than enjoy'd.
How like a younker[4] or a prodigal
The scarfèd bark puts from her native bay,
Hugg'd and embracèd by the wanton wind!
How like a prodigal doth she return,
With over-weather'd ribs,[5] and ragged sails,
Lean, rent, and beggar'd by the wanton wind!
Salar. Here comes Lorenzo: more of this hereafter.

Enter Lorenzo.

Loren. Sweet friends, your patience for my long abode;[6]
Not I, but my affairs have made you wait:
When you shall please to play the thieves for wives,

[2] The Chariot of Venus, Goddess of Love, was drawn through the air by doves.
[3] Plighted faith.
[4] A *youngster*, or *young gallant.*
[5] Weather-beaten ribs.
[6] Long delay.

I'll watch as long for you then. Come, approach;
Here dwells my father Jew.—Ho! who's within?

Enter JESSICA *above, in Boy's clothes.*

Jess. Who are you? Tell me for more certainty,
Albeit I'll swear that I do know your tongue.
Loren. Lorenzo, and thy love.
Jess. Lorenzo, certain; and my love indeed;
For whom love I so much? And now who knows
But you, Lorenzo, whether I am yours?
Loren. Heaven and thy thoughts are witness that thou art.
Jess. Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.
I'm glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,
For I am much ashamed of my exchange:[7]
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see
The pretty follies that themselves commit;
For, if they could, Cupid[8] himself would blush
To see me thus transformèd to a boy.
Loren. Descend, for you must be my torch-bearer.
Jess. What, must I hold a candle to my shames?
They in themselves, good sooth, are too-too light.[9]
Why, 'tis an office of discovery, love;
And I should be obscured.

[7] Change of dress.

[8] Cupid, the God of Love, was the son of Jupiter and Venus. He is represented as a naked, winged boy, with a bow and arrows, and a torch.

[9] A pun, meaning *light* morally.

Loren. So are you, sweet,
Even in the lovely garnish[10] of a boy.
But come at once;
For the close[11] night doth play the runaway,
And we are stay'd for[12] at Bassanio's feast.
Jess. I will make fast the doors, and gild myself
With some more ducats, and be with you straight.
[*Exit, from above.*
Grati. Now, by my hood, a Gentile,[13] and no Jew.
Loren. Beshrew me but[14] I love her heartily;
For she is wise, if I can judge of her;
And fair she is, if that mine eyes be true;
And true she is, as she hath proved herself;
And therefore, like herself, wise, fair, and true,
Shall she be placèd in my constant soul.—

Enter Jessica, *below.*

What, art thou come?—On, gentlemen; away!
Our masquing mates by this time for us stay.
[*Exit, with* Jessica *and* Salarino.

Enter Antonio.

Antonio. Who's there?
Grati. Signior Antonio?
Anto. Fie, fie, Gratiano! where are all the rest?
'Tis nine o'clock; our friends all stay for you.

[10] Showy dress.
[11] *Secret.*
[12] *Waited for.*
[13] The word *Gentile* may signify either a *heathen* or one *well-born.*
[14] Curse me if I do not love her.

No masque[15] to-night; the wind is come about;
Bassanio presently will go aboard:
I have sent twenty out to seek for you.

Grati. I'm glad on't:[16] I desire no more delight
Than to be under sail and gone to-night. [*Exeunt.* 70

SCENE VII.—*Belmont.*[1] *A Room in* PORTIA'S *House.*

Flourish of Cornets. Enter PORTIA, *with the Prince of* MOROCCO, *and both their Trains.*

Portia. Go, draw aside the curtains, and discover[2]
The several caskets to this noble Prince.—
Now make your choice.

Moroc. The first, of gold, which this inscription bears,—
Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire;
The second, silver, which this promise carries,—
Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.
This third, dull lead, with warning all as blunt,—
Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.—
How shall I know if I do choose the right? 10

Portia. The one of them contains my picture, Prince:
If you choose that, then I am yours withal.

Moroc. Some god direct my judgment! Let me see;
I will survey th' inscriptions back again.

[15] Masquerade ball.
[16] *Of it.*

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[1] A picturesque country-seat on a promontory overlooking the Adriatic Sea,—not far from Venice.
[2] *Uncover,* or *reveal.*

What says this leaden casket?
Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.
Must give,—for what? for lead? hazard for lead?
This casket threatens: men that hazard all
Do it in hope of fair advantages.
A golden mind stoops not to shows of dross;
I'll then nor give nor hazard aught for lead.
What says the silver, with her virgin hue?[3]
Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.
As much as he deserves!—Pause there, Morocco,
And weigh thy value with an even hand:
If thou be'st rated by thy estimation,
Thou dost deserve enough; and yet enough
May not extend so far as to the lady:
And yet to be afeard of my deserving,
Were but a weak disabling[4] of myself.
As much as I deserve! Why, that's the lady:
I do in birth deserve her, and in fortunes,
In graces, and in qualities of breeding;
But more than these, in love I do deserve.
What if I stray'd no further, but chose here?
Let's see once more this saying graved in gold:
Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.
Why, that's the lady; all the world desires her:
From the four corners of the Earth they come,
To kiss this shrine,[5] this mortal-breathing saint.

[3] A reference to the virgin Diana, the Moon-Goddess, since the moonlight was *silver-hued.*

[4] *Disparaging.*

[5] In his enthusiasm, the Prince of Morocco compares Portia to a holy shrine kissed by the worshipers who made long pilgrimages thither.

Th' Hyrcanian deserts[6] and the vasty[7] wilds
Of wide Arabia are as throughfares now
For princes to come view fair Portia:
The watery kingdom, whose ambitious head
Spits in the face of Heaven, is no bar
To stop the foreign spirits,[8] but they come,
As o'er a brook, to see fair Portia.
One of these three contains her heavenly picture.
Is't like that lead contains her? 'Twere damnation,
To think so base a thought: it were too gross[9]
To rib her cerecloth in the obscure grave.[10]
Or shall I think in silver she's immured,[11]
Being ten times undervalued to tried gold?[12]
O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem
Was set in worse than gold. They have in England
A coin that bears the figure of an angel[13]
Stampèd in gold, but that's insculp'd upon;[14]

[6] The Hyrcanian deserts comprised a large tract of country southeast of the Caspian Sea. The Hyrcanian tiger was regarded as the most ferocious of his kind.

[7] Waste, desolate.

[8] No obstacles can stop them.

[9] Too coarse.

[10] To inclose even her cerements, or shroud, in lead.

[11] *Inclosed*, literally *walled in*.

[12] "During the Middle ages, and down to the 16th century, the value of silver was 1/12 and 1/11, and even, as here stated, 1/10 that of gold. In the latter part of the 17th century, it fell to as low as 1/16. In the 18th century, it rose to 1/14, and is now (1870) about 1/15."—Rolfe.

[13] This coin was called *the angel* and was worth about ten shillings. The *angel* was probably placed on the best coin of pure gold as *English*, *Engelsche*, and *Angel-like* are so closely related.

[14] Graven on the outside.

But here an angel in a golden bed
Lies all within.—Deliver me the key;
Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!
Portia. There, take it, Prince; and if my form lie there,
Then I am yours. [*He unlocks the golden casket.*
Moroc. O Hell! what have we here?
A carrion Death,[15] within whose empty eye
There is a written scroll! I'll read the writing.
[Reads.] *All that glisters*[16] *is not gold,—*
Often have you heard that told:
Many a man his life hath sold,
But my outside to behold:
Gilded tombs do worms infold.
Had you been as wise as bold,
Young in limbs, in judgment old,
Your answer had not been inscroll'd:
Fare you well; your suit is cold.[17]
Cold indeed, and labour lost;
Then, farewell, heat, and welcome, frost!—
Portia, adieu! I have too grieved a heart
To take a tedious leave: thus losers part.[18]
[*Exit with Train.*
Portia. A gentle riddance.[19]—Draw the curtains, go:
Let all of his complexion choose me so. [*Exeunt.*

[15] A human skull.

[16] The old form of *glisten*. Shakespeare and Milton used *glisters* and not *glisten*.

[17] The courtship has utterly failed.

[18] Depart.

[19] Easily gotten rid of.

SCENE VIII.—*Venice. A Street.*

Enter SALARINO *and* SOLANIO.

Salar. Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail:
With him is Gratiano gone along;
And in their ship I'm sure Lorenzo is not.

Solan. The villain Jew with outcries raised the Duke,
Who went with him to search Bassanio's ship.

Salar. He came too late, the ship was under sail;
But there the Duke was given to understand
That in a gondola[1] were seen together
Lorenzo and his amorous Jessica:
Besides, Antonio certified the Duke
They were not with Bassanio in his ship.

Solan. I never heard a passion[2] so confused,
So strange, outrageous, and so variable,
As the dog Jew did utter in the streets:
My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!
Fled with a Christian! O my Christian ducats!—
Justice! the law! my ducats, and my daughter!
A sealed bag, two sealed bags of ducats,
Of double ducats, stol'n from me by my daughter!
And jewels,—two stones, two rich and precious stones,
Stol'n by my daughter!—Justice! find the girl!
She hath the stones upon her, and the ducats!

Salar. Why, all the boys in Venice follow him,
Crying,—his stones, his daughter, and his ducats.

[1] Gondola is a small rowboat used to convey passengers through the canal streets of Venice.

[2] *Passionate outcry.*

Solan. Let good Antonio look he keep his day,[3]
Or he shall pay for this.
Salar. Marry, well remember'd.
I reason'd[4] with a Frenchman yesterday,
Who told me, in the narrow seas[5] that part
The French and English, there miscarried
A vessel of our country richly fraught:[6]
I thought upon Antonio when he told me;
And wish'd in silence that it were not his.
Solan. You were best to tell Antonio what you hear;
Yet do't not suddenly, for it may grieve him.
Salar. A kinder gentleman treads not the earth.
I saw Bassanio and Antonio part:
Bassanio told him he would make some speed
Of his return: he answer'd, *Do not so;*
Slubber[7] *not business for my sake, Bassanio,*
But stay the very riping of the time:
And for the Jew's bond which he hath of me,
Let it not enter in your mind of love.[8]
Be merry; and employ your chiefest thoughts
To courtship, and such fair ostents[9] *of love*
As shall conveniently[10] *become you there.*

[3] Keep his contract to the day.
[4] Talked, or conversed.
[5] The English Channel.
[6] Freighted.
[7] To slight, to do carelessly.
[8] Loving mind.
[9] Displays.
[10] Fittingly, suitably. *Convenient* is used in the same sense in Eph. 5:4; Rom. 1:28; Prov. 30:8.

And even then, his eye being big with tears,
Turning his face, he put his hand behind him,
And with affection wondrous sensible[11]
He wrung Bassanio's hand; and so they parted.
Solan. I think he only loves the world for him.
I pray thee, let us go and find him out,
And quicken his embracèd heaviness[12]
With some delight or other.
Salar. Do we so.[13] [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IX.—*Belmont. A Room in* PORTIA'S *House.*

Enter NERISSA *with a* Servant.

Neris. Quick, quick, I pray thee; draw the curtain straight:[1]
The Prince of Arragon hath ta'en his oath,
And comes to his election[2] presently.

Flourish of Cornets. Enter the Prince of ARRAGON, PORTIA, *and their Trains.*

Portia. Behold, there stand the caskets, noble Prince;
If you choose that wherein I am contain'd,
Straight shall our nuptial rites be solemnized;
But if you fail, without more speech, my lord,
You must be gone from hence immediately.

[11] Sensitive.
[12] Relieve the melancholy to which he gives himself.
[13] Let us do so.

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[1] Straightway.
[2] Choice.

Arra. I am enjoin'd by oath t' observe three things:
First, never to unfold to any one
Which casket 'twas I chose; next, if I fail
Of the right casket, never in my life
To woo a maid in way of marriage; lastly,
If I do fail in fortune of my choice,
Immediately to leave you and be gone.

Portia. To these injunctions every one doth swear
That comes to hazard for[3] my worthless self.

Arra. And so have I address'd me.[4] Fortune now
To my heart's hope![5]—Gold, silver, and base lead.
Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath.
You shall look fairer, ere I give or hazard.
What says the golden chest, ha? let me see:
Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire.
What many men desire! That *many* may be meant
By[6] the fool multitude, that choose by show,
Not learning more than the fond[7] eye doth teach;
Which pries not to th' interior, but, like the martlet,[8]
Builds in the weather[9] on the outward wall,
Even in the force and road of casualty.[10]
I will not choose what many men desire,
Because I will not jump[11] with common spirits,

[3] To take chances for.
[4] Prepared myself.
[5] Success now to my heart's hope!
[6] Of.
[7] Foolish.
[8] Swallow.
[9] Exposed to the weather.
[10] In the way of accident or mis-chance.
[11] Agree with.

And rank me with the barbarous multitude.
Why, then to thee, thou silver treasure-house;
Tell me once more what title thou dost bear:
Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.
And well said too; for who shall go about
To cozen[12] fortune, and be honourable
Without the stamp of merit? Let none presume
To wear an undeservèd dignity.
O, that estates,[13] degrees, and offices,
Were not derived corruptly! and that clear honour
Were purchased by the merit of the wearer!
How many then should cover that stand bare![14]
How many be commanded that command!
How much low peasantry would then be glean'd
From the true seed of honour! and how much honour
Pick'd from the chaff and ruin[15] of the times,
To be new-varnish'd! Well, but to my choice:
Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.
I will assume desert.—Give me a key,
And instantly unlock my fortunes here.

[*He opens the silver casket.*

Portia. Too long a pause for that which you find there.

Arra. What's here? the portrait of a blinking idiot,
Presenting me a schedule! I will read it.—
How much unlike art thou to Portia!

[12] To cheat, or deceive.

[13] Ranks.

[14] "How many then *would keep their hats* on, who now stand *bare-headed* as before their masters or superiors."

[15] Refuse, rubbish.

How much unlike my hopes and my deservings!
Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves.
Did I deserve no more than a fool's head?
Is that my prize? are my deserts no better?

Portia. T' offend, and judge, are distinct offices,
And of opposèd natures.[16]

Arra. What is here?

The fire seven times tried this;
Seven times tried that judgment is
That did never choose amiss.
Some there be that shadows kiss;
Such have but a shadow's bliss.
There be fools alive, I wis,[17]
Silver's o'er; and so was this.[18]
Take what wife you will to bed,
I will ever be your head:[19]
So be gone, sir; you are sped.[20]

Still more fool I shall appear
By the time I linger here:
With one fool's head I came to woo,
But I go away with two.—
Sweet, adieu. I'll keep my oath,
Patiently to bear my wroth.[21]

[*Exeunt* Arragon *and Train.*

[16] An offender cannot sit as judge in his own case.

[17] Originally meant *certainly*. Here used as the equivalent of *think*, or *suppose*.

[18] This portrait of the "blinking idiot" was *silver'd o'er* because enclosed in the silver casket.

[19] "You will always have a Fool's head whether married or not."

[20] Your fate is settled.

[21] Suffering.

Portia. Thus hath the candle singed the moth.
O, these deliberate fools! when they do choose,
They have the wisdom by their wit to lose.[22]
Neris. The ancient saying is no heresy:
Hanging and wiving goes by destiny.
Portia. Come, draw the curtain, Nerissa.

Enter a Servant.

Servant. Where is my lady?
Portia. Here: what would my lord?[23]
Serv. Madam, there is alighted at your gate
A young Venetian, one that comes before
To signify th' approaching of his lord,
From whom he bringeth sensible regreets;[24]
To wit, besides commends and courteous breath,
Gifts of rich value. Yet I have not seen
So likely an ambassador of love:
A day in April never came so sweet,
To show how costly Summer was at hand,
As this fore-spurrer[25] comes before his lord.
Portia. No more, I pray thee: I am half afeard
Thou'lt say anon he is some kin to thee,

[22] "They overreach themselves with their own shrewdness, as men are apt to do who undertake to be specially wise."

"Disasters, do the best we can,
Will reach both great and small;
And he is oft the wisest man
Who is not wise at all."

[23] Used jestingly in response to *my lady*.
[24] Substantial greetings, as valuable presents.
[25] Forerunner.

Thou spend'st such high-day wit[26] in praising him.—
Come, come, Nerissa; for I long to see
Quick Cupid's post[27] that comes so mannerly.
Neris. Bassanio, Lord Love,[28] if thy will it be!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

Scene I.—*Venice. A Street.*

Enter Solanio *and* Salarino.

Solan. Now, what news on the Rialto?

Salar. Why, yet it lives there uncheck'd, that Antonio hath a ship of rich lading wreck'd on the narrow seas; the Goodwins,[1] I think they call the place; a very dangerous flat and fatal, where the carcases of many a tall ship lie buried, as they say, if my gossip Report be an honest woman of her word.[2]

Solan. I would she were as lying a gossip in that as ever knapp'd ginger,[3] or made her neighbours believe

[26] *High-day* is *holiday*, hence *holiday eloquence.*

[27] Cupid's swift messenger.

[28] May it be Bassanio, O Cupid!

[1] The Goodwins, or Goodwin sands, lay off the coast of Kent. Tradition says these sands were once an island belonging to Earl Goodwin, which was swallowed up by the sea about A. D. 1100. Many a richly laden vessel is said to have been wrecked in storms in these treacherous shallows. The *narrow seas* was the English Channel.

[2] If reports can be believed.

[3] Gnawed, or nibbled, or broke ginger into small pieces. Old people used ginger as a condiment, or relish.

she wept for the death of a third husband.[4] But it is true, without any slips of prolixity, or crossing the plain highway of talk, that the good Antonio, the honest Antonio,—O, that I had a title good enough to keep his name company!—

Salar. Come, the full stop.[5]

Solan. Ha,—what say'st thou?—Why, the end is, he hath lost a ship.

Salar. I would it might prove the end of his losses.

Solan. Let me say amen betimes, lest the Devil cross my prayer; for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew.—

Enter SHYLOCK.

How now, Shylock! what news among the merchants?

Shy. You knew, none so well, none so well as you, of my daughter's flight.

Salar. That's certain: I, for my part, knew the tailor that made the wings she flew withal.[6]

Solan. And Shylock, for his own part, knew the bird was fledg'd; and then it is the complexion[7] of them all to leave the dam.

Shy. She is damn'd for it.

Salar. That's certain, if the Devil may be her judge.

Shy. My own flesh and blood to rebel!

Solan. Out upon it, old carrion! rebels it at these years?

[4] Pretended to weep when she felt little sorrow. Solanio hopes that the *Report* of Antonio's loss is false.

[5] Finish what you have begun.

[6] Made the boy's suit she wore when she eloped.

[7] Nature.

Shy. I say my daughter is my flesh and blood.

Salar. There is more difference between thy flesh and hers than between jet and ivory; more between your bloods than there is between red wine and Rhenish.[8] But tell us, do you hear whether Antonio have had any loss at sea or no?

Shy. There I have another bad match:[9] a bankrupt, a prodigal, who dare scarce show his head on the Rialto; —a beggar, that was used to come so smug[10] upon the mart. Let him look to his bond: he was wont to call me usurer;—let him look to his bond: he was wont to lend money for a Christian courtesy;—let him look to his bond.

Salar. Why, I am sure, if he forfeit, thou wilt not take his flesh: what's that good for?

Shy. To bait fish withal: if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hinder'd me half a million;[11] laugh'd at my losses, mock'd at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed[12] with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same

[8] Rhenish wines are white wines.

[9] Connection, compact.

[10] Spruce, gay, trim. King Lear IV.: 6: "I will die bravely, like a *smug* bridegroom."

[11] Ducats.

[12] That is, "Is he not fed with the same food, etc?"

Winter and Summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge: If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance[13] be by Christian example? why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction.[14]

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Gentlemen, my master Antonio is at his house, and desires to speak with you both.

Salar. We have been up and down to seek him.

Solan. Here comes another of the tribe: a third cannot be match'd,[15] unless the Devil himself turn Jew.

[*Exeunt* SOLANIO, SALARINO, *and* Servant.

Enter TUBAL.

Shy. How now, Tubal! what news from Genoa? hast thou found my daughter?

Tub. I often came where I did hear of her, but cannot find her.

Shy. Why there, there, there, there! a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till

[13] Penalty.

[14] I will spare no effort to surpass my teachers, the Christians, in villainy.

[15] Cannot be found to match Shylock and Tubal.

now:—two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels.—I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin! No news of them?—Why, so;—and I know not what's spent in the search: why, thou loss upon loss! the thief gone with so much, and so much to find the thief; and no satisfaction, no revenge: nor no ill luck stirring but what lights o' my shoulders; no sighs but o' my breathing; no tears but o' my shedding.

Tub. Yes, other men have ill luck too. Antonio, as I heard in Genoa,—

Shy. What, what, what? ill luck, ill luck?

Tub.—hath an argosy cast away, coming from Tripolis.

Shy. I thank God, I thank God! Is it true, is it true?

Tub. I spoke with some of the sailors that escaped the wreck.

Shy. I thank thee, good Tubal. Good news, good news! ha, ha!—Where? in Genoa?

Tub. Your daughter spent in Genoa, as I heard, one night fourscore ducats.

Shy. Thou stick'st a dagger in me: I shall never see my gold again. Fourscore ducats at a sitting! fourscore ducats!

Tub. There came divers of Antonio's creditors in my company to Venice, that swear he cannot choose but break.[16]

Shy. I am very glad of it: I'll plague him; I'll torture him: I am glad of it.

[16] *Fail,* or *break up* in business.

Tub. One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey.

Shy. Out upon her! Thou torturest me, Tubal: it was my turquoise;[17] I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.

Tub. But Antonio is certainly undone.

Shy. Nay, that's true, that's very true. Go, Tubal, fee me an officer;[18] bespeak him a fortnight before. I will have the heart of him, if he forfeit; for, were he out of Venice, I can make what merchandise I will. Go, Tubal, and meet me at our synagogue; go, good Tubal; at our synagogue, Tubal. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Belmont. A Room in* PORTIA'S *House.*

Enter BASSANIO, PORTIA, GRATIANO, NERISSA, *and* Attendants. *The caskets are set out.*

Portia. I pray you, tarry; pause a day or two
Before you hazard; for, in choosing wrong,
I lose your company: therefore forbear awhile.
There's something tells me—but it is not love—
I would not lose you; and you know yourself,
Hate counsels not[1] in such a quality.
But, lest you should not understand me well,—

[17] The turquoise stone was a great favorite because of its value and because it was thought to have magic power to warn its possessor of threatened danger, and to avert quarrels between man and wife.

[18] Retain me a lawyer by paying at least a part of his fee in advance.

[1] Hate would prompt no such feeling.

And yet a maiden hath no tongue but thought,—
I would detain you here some month or two
Before you venture for me. I could teach you
How to choose right, but then I am forsworn;[2]
So will I never be: so may you miss me;
But if you do, you'll make me wish a sin,
That I had been forsworn. Beshrew[3] your eyes,
They have o'erlook'd[4] me, and divided me;
One half of me is yours, th' other half yours,—
Mine own, I would say; but if mine, then yours,
And so all yours! O, these naughty times
Put bars between the owners and their rights!
And so, though yours, not yours. Prove it so,[5]
Let fortune go to Hell for it, not I.
I speak too long; but 'tis to peise[6] the time,
To eke it, and to draw it out in length,
To stay you from election.

Bas. Let me choose;
For, as I am, I live upon the rack.

Portia. Upon the rack, Bassanio! then confess
What treason there is mingled with your love.

Bass. None but that ugly treason of mistrust,
Which makes me fear[7] th' enjoying of my love:
There may as well be amity and league

[2] *Perjured,* by violating the express terms of her father's will.

[3] *Curse.*

[4] Bewitched, fascinated.

[5] If it should prove so.

[6] To *weight down* makes any object to go slower. Hence in the passage, *peise* means to retard the flight of time.

[7] Doubt.

'Tween snow and fire, as treason and my love.
Portia. Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
Where men enforcèd do speak any thing.[8]
Bass. Promise me life, and I'll confess the truth.
Portia. Well then, confess, and live.[9]
Bass. Confess, and love,
Had been the very sum of my confession.
O happy torment, when my torturer
Doth teach me answers for deliverance![10]
But let me to my fortune and the caskets.
Portia. Away, then! I am lock'd in one of them:
If you do love me, you will find me out.—
Nerissa, and the rest, stand all aloof.—
Let music sound, while he doth make his choice;
Then, if he lose, he makes a swan-like end,
Fading in music: that the comparison
May stand more proper, my eye shall be the stream
And watery death-bed for him.[11] He may win,
And what is music then? then music is
Even as the flourish when true subjects bow
To a new-crowned monarch:[12] such it is

[8] An allusion to the use of the rack and torture to extort confession.

[9] If the one tortured, failed to confess, he was put to death.

[10] Sometimes, the torturer, out of compassion or for pay, whispered to the victim the words which, if spoken by him, would stop the torture.

[11] The swan was imagined to have the habit of singing very sweetly during its own process of dying. The bird is alluded to as singing her life away while floating passively on the stream.

[12] At the English coronation service, a flourish of trumpets accompanied the act of crowning the new monarch, at which signal all the subjects bowed in homage to their new ruler.

As are those dulcet sounds in break of day
That creep into the dreaming bridegroom's ear,
And summon him to marriage. Now he goes,
With no less presence,[13] but with much more love,
Than young Alcides, when he did redeem
The virgin tribute paid by howling Troy
To the sea-monster:[14] I stand for sacrifice;
The rest aloof are the Dardanian wives,[15]
With blearèd visages, come forth to view
The issue of th' exploit. Go, Hercules!
Live thou, I live: with much, much more dismay
I view the fight, than thou that makest the fray.

Music, whilst Bassanio *comments on the caskets to himself.*

SONG.

Tell me where is fancy bred,[16]
Or in the heart or in the head?
How begot, how nourished? [Reply.

[13] Dignity of bearing.

[14] Laomedon, King of Troy, had offended Neptune, God of the Sea, who threatened to inundate the country unless the monarch should sacrifice his daughter, Hesione. So she was fastened to a rock on the seashore to become the prey of a sea-monster. Hercules, called also Alcides, rescued her, not because of love for her, but merely to get possession of the pair of famous horses the king offered to whomsoever should rescue his daughter. Bassanio goes with much more of love.

[15] Trojan women.

[16] The *Song* describes exquisitely the birth and death of passing affection, "engendered in the eyes," not in the heart, as if to guide the true lover to a right choice. Bassanio at once catches the suggestion that outward show can not be relied upon to determine what is inside the casket.

It is engender'd in the eyes,
With gazing fed; and fancy dies[17]
In the cradle where it lies.
Let us all ring fancy's knell;
I'll begin it,—Ding, dong, bell.
All. *Ding, dong, bell.*

Bass. So may the outward shows be least themselves:
The world is still[18] deceived with ornament.
In law, what plea so tainted and corrupt,
But, being season'd with a gracious voice,
Obscures the show of evil? In religion,
What damnèd error, but some sober brow
Will bless it, and approve[19] it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?
There is no vice so simple,[20] but assumes
Some mark of virtue on his outward parts:
How many cowards, whose hearts are all as false
As stayers[21] of sand, wear yet upon their chins
The beards of Hercules and frowning Mars;[22]

[17] *Fancy*, often used as the equivalent for *love*, here indicates "that illusive power or action of the mind which has misled the other suitors." This sort of *fancy* dies "in the cradle" as soon as each previous suitor opens the wrong casket.

[18] Always, continually.

[19] Prove, justify.

[20] Unmixed.

[21] *Barriers, bulwarks.*—Knight. Some interpret *stayers* to mean *props*, or *supports* made of sand.

[22] God of War, son of Jupiter and Juno. In the Trojan war Mars took the part of the Trojans but was defeated by Diomede. The first month of the old Roman year (our March) was sacred to Mars.

Who, inward search'd, have livers white as milk![23]
And these assume but valour's excrement,[24]
To render them redoubted. Look on beauty,
And you shall see 'tis purchased by the weight;[25]
Which therein works a miracle in nature,
Making them lightest that wear most of it:[26]
So are those crispèd snaky golden locks,
Which make such wanton gambols with the wind,
Upon supposèd fairness,[27] often known
To be the dowry of a second head,
The skull that bred them[28] in the sepulchre.
Thus ornament is but the guildèd[29] shore
To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf
Veiling an Indian beauty[30] in a word,

[23] Cowards were elsewhere mentioned in Shakespeare as *lily-livered, milk-livered.*

[24] Any superficial growth upon the body as hair, beard, nails. Here used for *beard.*

[25] A reference to purchasing false hair by the ounce.

[26] *Lightest* in moral qualities, *vainest.*

[27] On the strength of their fictitious beauty. In his 68th sonnet, Shakespeare expresses his disapproval of the custom, then in vogue, of wearing false hair:

> "Thus in his cheek the map of days outworn,
> When beauty lived and died as flowers do now;
> Before the golden tresses of the dead,
> The right of sepulchres, were shorn away,
> To live a second life on second head;
> Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay."

[28] Supply *being* after *them.*

[29] *Treacherous shore.*—Steevens.

[30] *Beauty* is thought to be a misprint for "dowdy," "gypsy," or some other derogatory term to carry out the true contrast with *beauteous scarf.*

The seeming truth which cunning times put on
T' entrap the wisest. Therefore, thou gaudy gold,
Hard food for Midas,[31] I will none of thee;
Nor none of thee, thou stale and common drudge
'Tween man and man: but thou, thou meagre lead,
Which rather threatenest than dost promise aught,
Thy plainness moves me more than eloquence;
And here choose I: joy be the consequence!

Portia. How all the other passions fleet to air,—
As doubtful thoughts, and rash-embraced despair,
And shuddering fear, and green-eyed jealousy![32]
O love, be moderate; allay thy ecstasy;
In measure rain thy joy; scant this excess!
I feel too much thy blessing; make it less,
For fear I surfeit!

Bass. [*Opening the leaden casket.*] What find I here?
Fair Portia's counterfeit![33] What demi-god
Hath come so near creation? Move these eyes?
Or whether, riding on the balls of mine,
Seem they in motion? Here are sever'd lips,
Parted with sugar breath: so sweet a bar
Should sunder such sweet friends. Here in her hairs
The painter plays the spider; and hath woven
A golden mesh t' entrap the hearts of men,

[31] Midas, King of Phrygia, is said to have been given by Bacchus the power to turn everything he touched to gold in answer to the dearest wish of his heart. The story goes that King Midas found to his sorrow that his food and even his little daughter were turned to gold at his marvellous touch.

[32] *Jealousy* is frequently alluded to as "the green-eyed monster."

[33] Likeness, portrait.

Faster than gnats in cobwebs. But her eyes
How could he see to do them? having made one,
Methinks it should have power to steal both his,
And leave itself unfurnish'd.[34] Yet look, how far
The substance of my praise doth wrong this shadow
In underprizing it, so far this shadow
Doth limp behind the substance. Here's the scroll,
The continent[35] and summary of my fortune:—

You that choose not by the view
Chance as fair, and choose as true:
Since this fortune falls to you,
Be content and seek no new.
If you be well pleased with this,
And hold your fortune for your bliss,
Turn you where your lady is,
And claim her with a loving kiss.

A gentle scroll.—Fair lady, by your leave; [*Kissing her.*
I come by note, to give and to receive.[36]
Like one of two contending in a prize,[37]
That thinks he hath done well in people's eyes,
Hearing applause and universal shout,
Giddy in spirit, still gazing, in a doubt
Whether those peals of praise be his or no;
So, thrice fair lady, stand I, even so;

[34] With a companion.

[35] *Continent* is here used in its original sense, *that which contains.*

[36] "I come according to written warrant (the scroll just read) to give a kiss and to receive the lady."—*Clarendon Press Editors.*

[37] By metonymy, *prize* is used for the *contest* in which the *prize* is granted.

As doubtful whether what I see be true,
Until confirm'd, sign'd, ratified by you.
Portia. You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand,
Such as I am: though for myself alone
I would not be ambitious in my wish,
To wish myself much better; yet for you
I would be trebled twenty times myself;
A thousand times more fair, ten thousand times more rich;
That, only to stand high in your account,
I might in virtues, beauties, livings,[38] friends,
Exceed account: but the full sum of me
Is sum of nothing;[39] which, to term in gross,[40]
Is an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised:
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn; then happier in this,
She is not bred so dull but she can learn;
Happiest of all, in that her gentle spirit
Commits itself to yours to be directed,
As from her lord, her governor, her king.
Myself and what is mine to you and yours
Is now converted: but now[41] I was the lord[42]
Of this fair mansion, master of my servants,
Queen o'er myself; and even now, but now,
This house, these servants, and this same myself,
Are yours, my lord: I give them with this ring;

[38] Possessions, fortune.
[39] A modest, unaffected estimate born of the emotions of the hour.
[40] To sum up.
[41] But a moment ago.
[42] Owner, master.

Which when you part from, lose, or give away,
Let it presage the ruin of your love,
And be my vantage to exclaim on you.[43]

Bass. Madam, you have bereft me of all words;
Only my blood speaks to you in my veins:
And there is such confusion in my powers,
As, after some oration fairly spoke[44]
By a belovèd prince, there doth appear
Among the buzzing pleasèd multitude;
Where every something, being blent together,
Turns to a wild of nothing, save of joy,
Express'd and not express'd. But when this ring
Parts from this finger, then parts life from hence:
O, then be bold to say Bassanio's dead!

Neris. My lord and lady, it is now our time,
That have stood by, and seen our wishes prosper,
To cry good joy: Good joy, my lord and lady!

Grati. My Lord Bassanio and my gentle lady,
I wish you all the joy that you can wish;
For I am sure you can wish none from me:[45]
And, when your Honours mean to solemnize
The bargain of your faith, I do beseech you,
Even at that time I may be married too.

Bass. With all my heart, so thou canst get a wife.

Grati. I thank your lordship, you have got me one.
My eyes, my lord, can look as swift as yours:

[43] Be sufficient cause for me to cry against you.

[44] Spoken.

[45] "You have so much joy yourselves in each other, that you cannot grudge any to me."

You saw the mistress, I beheld the maid;[46]
You loved, I loved; for intermission[47]
No more pertains to me, my lord, than you.
Your fortune stood upon the caskets there,
And so did mine too, as the matter falls;
For, wooing here, until I swet[48] again,
And swearing, till my very roof was dry
With oaths of love, at least,—if promise last,—
I got a promise of this fair one here,
To have her love, provided that your fortune
Achieved her mistress.

Portia. Is this true, Nerissa?

Neris. Madam, it is, so you stand pleased withal.[49]

Bass. And do you, Gratiano, mean good faith?

Grati. Yes, faith, my lord.

Bass. Our feast shall[50] be much honour'd in your marriage.

Grati. But who comes here? Lorenzo, and his infidel?[51]
What, and my old Venetian friend Solanio?

Enter LORENZO, JESSICA, *and* SOLANIO.

Bass. Lorenzo and Solanio, welcome hither!
If that the youth of my new interest here

[46] Nerissa is a companion—rather than a servant, or *maid*. Gratiano speaks thus in humble deference to Portia lest he should seem to have abused his privilege as a friend to Bassanio on this mission of love.

[47] Pause, or delay. *For* seems to be used here with the force of *and*.

[48] Sweated.

[49] *If you are pleased with our agreement.*

[50] Will.

[51] The Jewess, Jessica.

Have power to bid you welcome.—By your leave,
I bid my very[52] friends and countrymen,
Sweet Portia, welcome.

Portia. So do I, my lord:
They are entirely welcome.

Loren. I thank your Honour.—For my part, my lord,
My purpose was not to have seen you here;
But, meeting with Solanio by the way,
He did entreat me, past all saying nay,
To come with him along.

Solan. I did, my lord,
And I have reason for't. Signior Antonio
Commends him to you. [*Gives* Bassanio *a letter.*

Bass. Ere I ope his letter,
I pray you, tell me how my good friend doth.

Solan. Not sick, my lord, unless it be in mind;
Nor well, unless in mind: his letter there
Will show you his estate.[53]

Grati. Nerissa, cheer yond stranger; bid her welcome.—
Your hand, Solanio: what's the news from Venice?
How doth that royal merchant, good Antonio?
I know he will be glad of our success;
We are the Jasons, we have won the fleece.[54]

Solan. Would you had won the fleece that he hath lost!

[52] *Very* means true. *Very* is the French *vrai* from Latin *veracus*, a derivative of *verus*. See Gen. 27:21; John 7:26.

[53] *State, condition.*

[54] See note 56, Act. I., Scene I.

Portia. There are some shrewd[55] conténts in yond same paper,
That steal the colour from Bassanio's cheek:
Some dear friend dead; else nothing in the world
Could turn so much the constitution[56]
Of any constant[57] man. What, worse and worse!—
With leave, Bassanio; I am half yourself,
And I must have the half of any thing
That this same paper brings you.
Bass. O sweet Portia!
Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words
That ever blotted paper. Gentle lady,
When I did first impart my love to you,
I freely told you, all the wealth I had
Ran in my veins,—I was a gentleman:
And then I told you true; and yet, dear lady,
Rating myself at nothing, you shall see
How much I was a braggart. When I told you
My state[58] was nothing, I should then have told you
That I was worse than nothing; for, indeed,
I have engaged myself to a dear friend,
Engaged my friend to his mere[59] enemy,
To feed my means. Here is a letter, lady,—
The paper as the body of my friend,
And every word in it a gaping wound,
Issuing life-blood.—But is it true, Solanio?

[55] *Sharp, biting,*—hence *painful.*
[56] Usual mood. Bassanio is habitually of cheerful disposition.
[57] Self-possessed, self-controlled.
[58] Estate.
[59] To his *absolutely sworn* enemy.

Have all his ventures fail'd? What, not one hit?[60]
From Tripolis, from Mexico, and England,
From Lisbon, Barbary, and India?
And not one vessel 'scape the dreadful touch
Of merchant-marring rocks?

Solan. Not one, my lord.
Besides, it should[61] appear that, if he had
The present money to discharge[62] the Jew,
He would not take it. Never did I know
A creature, that did bear the shape of man,
So keen and greedy to confound[63] a man:
He plies the Duke at morning and at night;
And doth impeach the freedom of the State,[64]
If they deny him justice: twenty merchants,
The Duke himself, and the magnificoes
Of greatest port,[65] have all persuaded with[66] him;
But none can drive him from the envious[67] plea
Of forfeiture, of justice, and his bond.

Jess. When I was with him, I have heard him swear,
To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen,
That he would rather have Antonio's flesh
Than twenty times the value of the sum

[60] Hit the mark, succeeded.

[61] *Would.*

[62] Pay.

[63] Ruin, destroy.

[64] Denies that strangers have equal rights in Venice if they deny him justice.—Clarendon Press Editors.

[65] Noblemen, or Grandies, of the highest rank.

[66] *Used persuasion with.*

[67] Malicious.

That he did owe him; and I know, my lord,
If law, authority, and power deny[68] not,
It will go hard with poor Antonio.
Portia. Is it your dear friend that is thus in trouble?
Bass. The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
The best-condition'd and unwearied[69] spirit
In doing courtesies; and one in whom
The ancient Roman honour more appears
Than any that draws breath in Italy.
Portia. What sum owes he the Jew?
Bass. For me three thousand ducats.
Portia. What, no more?
Pay him six thousand, and deface the bond;
Double six thousand, and then treble that,[70]
Before a friend of this description[71]
Shall lose a hair through my Bassanio's fault.
First go with me to church and call me wife,
And then away to Venice to your friend;
For never shall you lie by Portia's side
With an unquiet soul. You shall have gold
To pay the petty debt twenty times over;
When it is paid, bring your true friend along:
My maid Nerissa and myself, meantime,
Will live as maids and widows. Come, away!
For you shall hence upon your wedding-day.

[68] Hinder.

[69] Best tempered and most self-sacrificing person.

[70] Shylock had loaned 3000 ducats to Antonio, or about $4590. Portia now suggests the offer of 36,000 ducats, or about $55,000 to cancel the bond.

[71] Such a friend as Bassanio has just described in Antonio.

Bid your friends welcome, show a merry cheer;[72]
Since you are dear-bought, I will love you dear.
But let me hear the letter of your friend.

Bass. [Reads.] *Sweet Bassanio, my ships have all miscarried, my creditors grow cruel, my estate is very low, my bond to the Jew is forfeit;*[73] *and since, in paying it, it is impossible I should live, all debts are clear'd between you and I,*[74] *if I might but see you at my death. Notwithstanding, use your pleasure: if your love do not persuade you to come, let not my letter.*

Portia. O love, despatch all business, and be gone!

Bass. Since I have your good leave to go away,
I will make haste; but, till I come again,
No bed shall e'er be guilty of my stay,
Nor rest be interposer 'twixt us twain. [*Exeunt.*

Scene III.—*Venice. A Street.*

Enter Shylock, Salarino, Antonio, *and* Jailer.

Shy. Jailer, look to him: tell not me of mercy.—
This is the fool that lends out money gratis.—
Jailer, look to him.

Anto. Hear me yet, good Shylock.

Shy. I'll have my bond; speak not against my bond:
I've sworn an oath that I will have my bond.

[72] Countenance.

[73] Forfeited.

[74] This disregard of the proper inflection of personal pronouns was common in both spoken and written English of Shakespeare's day.

Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause;
But, since I am a dog, beware my fangs:
The Duke shall grant me justice.—I do wonder,
Thou naughty[1] jailer, that thou art so fond[2]
To come abroad with him at his request.
Anto. I pray thee, hear me speak.
Shy. I'll have my bond; I will not hear thee speak:
I'll have my bond; and therefore speak no more.
I'll not be made a soft and dull-eyed[3] fool,
To shake the head, relent, and sigh, and yield
To Christian intercessors.[4] Follow not;
I'll have no speaking: I will have my bond.
[*Exit* SHYLOCK.
Salar. It is the most impenetrable cur
That ever kept[5] with men.
Anto. Let him alone:
I'll follow him no more with bootless prayers.
He seeks my life; his reason well I know:
I oft deliver'd from his forfeitures
Many that have at times made moan[6] to me;
Therefore he hates me.
Salar. I am sure, the Duke
Will never grant this forfeiture to hold.

[1] Wicked. The word *naughty* originally carried a much stronger meaning than at present. In King Lear III., 7, Gloster addresses Regan as "*Naughty lady*" when she cruelly plucks his beard.

[2] Foolish.

[3] Indiscriminate.

[4] To Christians who should intercede for mercy or leniency.

[5] *Dwelt with,* or *kept company with.*

[6] Complaint.

Anto. The Duke cannot deny the course of law,[7]
For the commodity[8] that strangers have
With us in Venice: if it be denied,
'Twill much impeach the justice of the State,
Since that the trade and profit of the city
Consisteth of all nations.[9] Therefore, go:
These griefs and losses have so 'bated me,[10]
That I shall hardly spare a pound of flesh
To-morrow to my bloody creditor.—
Well, jailer, on.—Pray God, Bassanio come
To see me pay his debt, and then I care not! [*Exeunt.*

Scene IV.—*Belmont. A Room in* Portia's *House.*

Enter Portia, Nerissa, Lorenzo, Jessica, *and* Balthazar.

Loren. Madam, although I speak it in your presence,
You have a noble and a true conceit[1]
Of god-like amity; which appears most strongly
In bearing thus the absence of your lord.
But, if you knew to whom you show this honour,
How true a gentleman you send relief,

[7] The laws of Venice granted the same rights to strangers as to citizens. Antonio was a citizen; Shylock a *stranger*, or foreigner.

[8] Because of commercial relations.

[9] In a city dependent on trade, citizens and strangers must be treated with equal fairness.

[10] Reduced my flesh.

---

[1] Conception, idea.

How dear a lover[2] of my lord your husband,
I know you would be prouder of the work
Than customary bounty can enforce you.[3]
Portia. I never did repent for doing good,
Nor shall not now: for in companions[4]
That do converse and waste the time[5] together,
Whose souls do bear an equal yoke of love,
There must be needs a like proportion[6]
Of lineaments, of manners, and of spirit;
Which makes me think that this Antonio,
Being the bosom lover[7] of my lord,
Must needs be like my lord. If it be so,
How little is the cost I have bestow'd
In purchasing the semblance of my soul
From out the state of hellish cruelty!
This comes too near the praising of myself;
Therefore no more of it: hear other things.
Lorenzo, I commit into your hands
The husbandry and manage[8] of my house
Until my lord's return: for mine own part,
I have toward Heaven breathed a secret vow
To live in prayer and contemplation,
Only attended by Nerissa here,
Until her husband and my lord's return:

[2] *Friend.* *Lover* and *friend* were once synonyms.
[3] Than mere charitable motives would induce you to be.
[4] *Fellows*, used here contemptuously.
[5] Keep company and spend the time together.
[6] *Equality* or *resemblance.*
[7] *Bosom friend.*
[8] Stewardship and management.

There is a monastery two miles off,
And there we will abide. I do desire you
Not to deny this imposition,[9]
The which my love and some necessity
Now lays upon you.

Loren. Madam, with all my heart,
I shall obey you in all fair commands.

Portia. My people do already know my mind,
And will acknowledge you and Jessica
In place of Lord Bassanio and myself.
So, fare you well, till we shall meet again.

Loren. Fair thoughts and happy hours attend on you!

Jess. I wish your ladyship all heart's content.

Portia. I thank you for your wish, and am well pleased
To wish it back on you: fare you well, Jessica.—

[*Exeunt* Jessica *and* Lorenzo.

Now, Balthazar,
As I have ever found thee honest-true,
So let me find thee still. Take this same letter,
And use thou all th' endeavour of a man
In speed to Padua:[10] see thou render this
Into my cousin's hand, Doctor Bellario;
And, look, what notes and garments he doth give thee,
Bring them, I pray thee, with imagined speed[11]

[9] Not to refuse this charge I have placed upon you.

[10] The seat of the University of Padua far famed for its eminent jurists.

[11] With the speed of thought.

Unto the Tranect,[12] to the common ferry
Which trades to Venice. Waste no time in words,
But get thee gone: I shall be there before thee.

Balth. Madam, I go with all convenient[13] speed.
[*Exit.*

Portia. Come on, Nerissa; I have work in hand
That you yet know not of: we'll see our husbands
Before they think of us.[14]

Neris. Shall they see us?

Portia. They shall, Nerissa; but in such a habit,
That they shall think we are accomplished[15]
With what we lack. I'll hold thee any wager,
When we are both accoutred[16] like young men,
I'll prove the prettier fellow of the two,
And wear my dagger with the braver[17] grace;
And speak between the change of man and boy
With a reed voice; and turn two mincing steps
Into a manly stride; and speak of frays,
Like a fine-bragging youth; and tell quaint[18] lies,
How honourable ladies sought my love,
Which I denying,[19] they fell sick and died;

[12] "There are in Venice thirteen ferries or passages which they commonly call Traghetti, where passengers may be transported in a gondola to what place of the city they will."—Coryat: *Crudities*, 1611.

[13] *Suitable speed*, or *with all possible speed.*

[14] Before they think of our sceing them.

[15] Furnished.

[16] Dressed.

[17] Finer grace.

[18] Clever, or cunning.

[19] Refusing.

I could not do withal:[20] then I'll repent,
And wish, for all that, that I had not kill'd them.
And twenty of these puny lies I'll tell;
That men shall swear I've discontinued school
Above a twelvemonth. I've within my mind
A thousand raw[21] tricks of these bragging Jacks,[22]
Which I will practise.—
But come; I'll tell thee all my whole device
When I am in my coach, which stays for us
At the park-gate; and therefore haste away,
For we must measure twenty miles to-day. [*Exeunt.*

Scene V.—*The Same. A Garden.*

Enter Launcelot *and* Jessica.

Laun. Yes, truly; for, look you, the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children: therefore, I promise ye, I fear you[1] I was always plain with you, and so now I speak my agitation[2] of the matter: therefore be of good cheer, for truly I think you are damned. There is but one hope in it that can do you any good; and that is but a kind of base hope neither.

Jess. And what hope is that, I pray thee?

Laun. Marry, you may partly hope that you are not the Jew's daughter.

[20] *I could not help it.*

[21] Crude, or "green."

[22] A common term of contempt.

---

[1] Read *for you.*

[2] Frank opinion.

Jess. That were a kind of base hope, indeed: so the sins of my mother should be visited upon me.

Laun. Truly, then, I fear you are damned both by father and mother: thus when I shun Scylla, your father, I fall into Charybdis,[3] your mother: well, you are gone both ways.

Jess. I shall be saved by my husband; he hath made me a Christian.

Laun. Truly, the more to blame he: we were Christians enow[4] before; e'en as many as could well live, one by another. This making of Christians will raise the price of hogs: if we grow all to be pork-eaters, we shall not shortly have a rasher on the coals for money.

Enter LORENZO.

Loren. I shall grow jealous of you shortly, Launcelot, if you thus get my wife into corners.

Jess. Nay, you need not fear us, Lorenzo: Launcelot and I are out.[5] He tells me flatly, there is no mercy for

[3] Scylla was a beautiful nymph who excited the jealousy of Neptune's wife, Amphitrite, and was changed by the goddess into a frightful sea-monster, which had six fearfully ugly heads and necks, and which, rising unexpectedly from the deep, used to take off as many as six sailors from a vessel, and carry them to the bottom of the sea. Charybdis was an alternative danger in the form of a whirlpool on the coast of Sicily which threatened destruction to all mariners.

"There on the right her dogs foul Scylla hides,
Charybdis roaring on the left presides."—Virgil.

A common modern prosaic equivalent is "Out of the frying-pan into the fire."

[4] Plural form of enough.

[5] Have nothing in common.

me in Heaven, because I am a Jew's daughter: and he says you are no good member of the commonwealth; for, in converting Jews to Christians, you raise the price of pork.

Loren. I think the best grace of wit will shortly turn into silence, and discourse grow commendable in none only but parrots.—Go in, sirrah; bid them prepare for dinner.

Laun. That is done, sir; they have all stomachs.

Loren. Goodly Lord, what a wit-snapper are you! then, bid them prepare dinner.

Laun. That is done too, sir; only, *cover* is the word.

Loren. Will you cover,[6] then, sir?

Laun. Not so, sir, neither; I know my duty.

Loren. Yet more quarreling with occasion![7] Wilt thou show the whole wealth of thy wit in an instant? I pray thee, understand a plain man in his plain meaning: go to thy fellows; bid them cover the table, serve in the meat, and we will come in to dinner.

Laun. For the table, sir, it shall be served in; for the meat, sir, it shall be covered; for your coming in to dinner, sir, why, let it be as humours and conceits shall govern.

[*Exit* Launcelot.

Loren. O, dear discretion,[8] how his words are suited![9] The fool hath planted in his memory

[6] Launcelot uses *cover* in two meanings, a term used in setting the table, and for putting on the hat.

[7] Launcelot's wit is *out of season*, irrelevant to the matter in hand.

[8] Discrimination.

[9] Suited to each other, arranged.

An army of good words; and I do know
A many[10] fools, that stand in better place,
Garnish'd[11] like him, that for a tricksy word
Defy the matter.[12]—How cheer'st thou,[13] Jessica?
And now, good sweet, say thy opinion:
How dost thou like the Lord Bassanio's wife?

Jess. Past all expressing. It is very meet
The Lord Bassanio live an upright life;
For, having such a blessing in his lady,
He finds the joys of Heaven here on Earth;
And if on Earth he do not merit it,[14]
In reason he should never come to Heaven.
Why, if two gods should play some heavenly match,
And on the wager lay two earthly women,
And Portia one, there must be something else
Pawn'd[15] with the other; for the poor rude world
Hath not her fellow.[16]

Loren. Even such a husband
Hast thou of me as she is for a wife.

Jess. Nay, but ask my opinion too of that.

Loren. I will anon: first let us go to dinner.

Jess. Nay, let me praise you while I have a stomach.[17]

[10] *A many* is obsolete. We still say *a few* and *many a*.

[11] Furnished, equipped.

[12] "For a quibbling word (or a play upon words), set the meaning at defiance."—Rolfe.

[13] "What cheer?" or "How is't with you?"

[14] *It* refers to *blessing* above.

[15] Staked, wagered.

[16] *Match*, or *equal*.

[17] An inclination to praise.

Loren. No, pray thee, let it serve for table-talk;
Then, howsoe'er thou speak'st, 'mong other things
I shall digest it.
Jess. Well, I'll set you forth. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

Scene I.—*Venice. A Court of Justice.*

Enter the Duke; *the* Magnificoes; Antonio, Bassanio, Gratiano, Salarino, Solanio, *and Others.*

Duke. What, is Antonio here?
Anto. Ready, so please your Grace.
Duke. I'm sorry for thee: thou art come to answer
A stony adversary, an inhuman wretch
Uncapable[1] of pity, void and empty
From any dram of mercy.
Anto. I have heard
Your Grace hath ta'en great pains to qualify[2]
His rigorous course; but since he stands obdúrate,
And that[3] no lawful means can carry me
Out of his envy's[4] reach, I do oppose
My patience to his fury; and am arm'd
To suffer with a quietness of spirit
The very tyranny and rage of his.

[1] *Incapable.*
[2] *To modify.*
[3] *Since that.*
[4] Malice's.

Duke. Go one, and call the Jew into the court.
Solan. He's ready at the door: he comes, my lord.

Enter SHYLOCK.

Duke. Make room, and let him stand before our face.—
Shylock, the world thinks, and I think so too,
That thou but lead'st this fashion of thy malice[5]
To the last hour of act; and then 'tis thought
Thou'lt show thy mercy and remorse,[6] more strange
Than is thy strange-apparent cruelty:
And where[7] thou now exact'st the penalty,—
Which is a pound of this poor merchant's flesh,—
Thou wilt not only loose[8] the forfeiture,
But, touch'd with human gentleness and love,
Forgive a moiety[9] of the principal;
Glancing an eye of pity on his losses,
That have of late so huddled on his back;
Enough to press a royal merchant[10] down,
And pluck commiseration of his state
From brassy bosoms and rough hearts of flint,
From stubborn Turks and Tartars, never train'd

[5] "You keep up this show of malice only until the final hour of execution."—Rolfe.

[6] Compassion.

[7] Whereas.

[8] Remit, or release.

[9] A portion, strictly speaking *half*, but the more general meaning was attached to *moiety* as a rule.

[10] A merchant of great wealth and high social standing. These were frequently styled *merchant princes*.

To offices of tender courtesy.
We all expect a gentle answer, Jew.

Shy. I have possess'd[11] your Grace of what I purpose;
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn
To have the due and forfeit of my bond:
If you deny it, let the danger light
Upon your charter and your city's freedom.[12]
You'll ask me, why I rather choose to have
A weight of carrion-flesh than to receive
Three thousand ducats: I'll not answer that.
But, say, it is my humour; is it answer'd?[13]
What if my house be troubled with a rat,
And I be pleased to give ten thousand ducats
To have it baned![14] What, are you answer'd yet?
Some men there are love not a gaping pig;[15]
Some, that are mad if they behold a cat;
And others, when the bag-pipe sings i' the nose,[16]
Cannot contain themselves for affection.[17]

[11] *Informed.*

[12] Perhaps Shakespeare had London in mind, since that city held certain rights and franchises by royal charter, and was likely to have such rights and franchises revoked on account of acts of flagrant injustice.

[13] Suppose I should say, it is my whim; is your question answered?

[14] Poisoned,—perhaps with *ratsbane.*

[15] *Shylock* may have meant either the gaping of a pig brought to table with an apple in its mouth, or the gaping of the living, squealing animal. In England, a boar's head is served at Christmas with a lemon in its mouth.

[16] Allusion to the strange nasal sound of the bag-pipe.

[17] *Because of impulse.*

Masters of passion[18] sway it to the mood
Of what it likes or loathes.[19] Now, for your answer:
As there is no firm reason to be render'd,
Why he cannot abide a gaping pig;
Why he, a harmless necessary cat;
Why he, a wauling bag-pipe,[20] but of force[21]
Must yield to such inevitable shame
As to offend, himself being offended;
So can I give no reason, nor I will not,
More than a lodged[22] hate and a certain loathing
I bear Antonio, that I follow thus
A losing suit against him. Are you answer'd?

Bass. This is no answer, thou unfeeling man, T' excuse the current[23] of thy cruelty.

Shy. I am not bound to please thee with my answer.

Bass. Do all men kill the things they do not love?

Shy. Hates any man the thing he would not kill?

Bass. Every offence is not a hate at first.

Shy. What, wouldst thou have a serpent sting thee twice?

Anto. I pray you, think you question with the Jew.[24]
You may as well go stand upon the beach,

[18] Agencies that move the feelings to sympathize with or to condemn a person.

[19] The feelings are deep-rooted within and are swayed by instinctive *appetencies*, or likes or dislikes.

[20] Same as "when the bag-pipe sings i' the nose."

[21] *Of force* means *necessarily*.

[22] Abiding, settled hate.

[23] Persistent course.

[24] I beg of you to consider that you are arguing with the Jew.

And bid the main flood[25] 'bate his usual height;
You may as well use question with the wolf,
Why he hath made the ewe bleat for the lamb
You may as well forbid the mountain pines
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise,
When they are fretten[26] with the gusts of heaven;
You may as well do any thing most hard,
As seek to soften that—than which what's harder?—
His Jewish heart. Therefore, I do beseech you,
Make no more offers, use no further means,
But, with all brief and plain conveniency,[27]
Let me have judgment,[28] and the Jew his will.

Bass. For thy three thousand ducats here is six.

Shy. If every ducat in six thousand ducats
Were in six parts, and every part a ducat,
I would not draw them: I would have my bond.

Duke. How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?

Shy. What judgment shall I dread, doing no wrong?
You have among you many a purchased slave,
Which, like your asses and your dogs and mules,
You use in abject and in slavish parts,[29]
Because you bought them. Shall I say to you,
Let them be free, marry them to your heirs?
Why sweat they under burdens? let their beds
Be made as soft as yours, and let their palates

[25] Ocean tide.
[26] Fretted.
[27] With brevity and directness.
[28] Let me be sentenced.
[29] Capacities, employments.

Be season'd with such viands? You will answer,
The slaves are ours. So do I answer you:
The pound of flesh, which I demand of him,
Is dearly bought, 'tis mine, and I will have it:
If you deny me, fie upon your law!
There is no force in the decrees of Venice.
I stand for judgment: answer; shall I have it?

Duke. Upon my power[30] I may dismiss this court,
Unless Bellario, a learnèd Doctor,
Whom I have sent for to determine this,[31]
Come here to-day.

Solan. My lord, here stays without
A messenger with letters from the Doctor,
New come from Padua.

Duke. Bring us the letters; call the messenger.

Bass. Good cheer, Antonio! What, man, courage yet!
The Jew shall have my flesh, blood, bones, and all,
Ere thou shalt lose for me one drop of blood.

Anto. I am a tainted wether of the flock,
Meetest for death:[32] the weakest kind of fruit
Drops earliest to the ground, and so let me:
You cannot better be employ'd, Bassanio,
Than to live still, and write mine epitaph.

Enter NERISSA, *dressed like a Lawyer's Clerk.*

Duke. Came you from Padua, from Bellario?

Neris. From both, my lord: Bellario greets your Grace. [*Presents a letter.*

[30] By virtue of the authority given me as Duke.

[31] Decide this case.

[32] Fittest for death.

Bass. Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?
Shy. To cut the forfeit from that bankrupt there.
Grati. Not on thy sole, but on thy soul,[33] harsh Jew,
Thou makest thy knife keen; but no metal can,
No, not the hangman's[34] axe, bear half the keenness
Of thy sharp envy. Can no prayers pierce thee?
Shy. No, none that thou hast wit enough to make.
Grati. O, be thou damn'd, inexorable dog!
And for thy life let justice be accused.[35]
Thou almost makest me waver in my faith,
To hold opinion with Pythagoras,[36]
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men: thy currish spirit
Govern'd a wolf, who hang'd for human slaughter,
Even from the gallows did his fell[37] soul fleet,
And, whilst thou lay'st with thy unhallow'd dam,

[33] An illustration of the same sentiment is given in 2 Henry IV., IV., 4:

"Thou hid'st a thousand daggers in thy thoughts,
Which thou hast whetted on thy stony heart."

[34] The term *hangman* was used as a general term for *executioner*. For example, Brabant Junior, in *Jacke Drums Entertainment* (1616) says, "Let mine owne hand Be mine owne *hangman*."

[35] Let justice be charged with injustice for suffering you to live.

[36] Pythagoras was an ancient philosopher of Samos who is supposed to have taught the Greeks the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, the evolution of a soul through successive orders of beings, from the lowest to the highest, until perfection is attained.

[37] Cruel.

Infused itself in thee; for thy desires
Are wolfish, bloody, starved,[38] and ravenous.

Shy. Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,[39]
Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak[40] so loud:
Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall
To cureless[41] ruin. I stand here for law.

Duke. This letter from Bellario doth commend
A young and learnèd Doctor to our court.—
Where is he?

Neris. He attendeth here hard by,
To know your answer, whether you'll admit him.

Duke. With all my heart.—Some three or four of you
Go give him courteous conduct to this place.—
Meantime the court shall hear Bellario's letter.

[Clerk reads.] *Your Grace shall understand, that at the receipt of your letter I am very sick; but, in the instant that your messenger came, in loving visitation was with me a young doctor of Rome; his name is Balthazar. I acquainted him with the cause in controversy between the Jew and Antonio the merchant: we turn'd o'er many books together: he is furnished with my opinion; which, better'd with his own learning, the greatness whereof I cannot enough commend, comes with him, at my importunity, to fill up your*

[38] The word is the Anglo-Saxon *steorfan*, Old English *sterven*, German *sterben*. It originally meant to die, but later came to be used in the sense of perishing with cold or with hunger.

[39] Till thou cans't remove the seal from off my bond by scoffing.

[40] *In speaking.*

[41] Also printed *endless.*

Grace's request in my stead. I beseech you, let his lack of years be no impediment to let him lack a reverend estimation;[42] *for I never knew so young a body with so old a head. I leave him to your gracious acceptance, whose trial shall better publish his commendation.*

Duke. You hear the learn'd Bellario, what he writes:
And here, I take it, is the Doctor come.—

Enter Portia, *dressed like a Doctor of Laws.*

Give me your hand: came you from old Bellario?

Portia. I did, my lord.

Duke. You're welcome: take your place.
Are you acquainted with the difference
That holds this present question[43] in the court?

Portia. I am informèd throughly[44] of the cause.
Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?

Duke. Antonio and old Shylock, both stand forth.

Portia. Is your name Shylock?

Shy. Shylock is my name.

Portia. Of a strange nature is the suit you follow;
Yet in such rule,[45] that the Venetian law
Cannot impugn[46] you as you do proceed.—
[*To* Anto.] You stand within his danger,[47] do you not?

Anto. Ay, so he says.

[42] Let his youthfulness be no hindrance to his being reverently esteemed.—Hudson.

[43] The dispute which is the subject of the present trial.

[44] *Thoroughly.* These two words are used interchangeably with the same meaning.

[45] Such due form of law.

[46] Cannot *fight against,* oppose.

[47] *Power.*

Portia. Do you confess the bond?
Anto. I do.
Portia. Then must[48] the Jew be merciful.
Shy. On what compulsion[49] must I? tell me that.
Portia. The quality of mercy is not strain'd;[50]
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven[51]
Upon the place beneath: it is twice bless'd;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:[52]
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest:[53] it becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows[54] the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,[55]
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show[56] likest God's

[48] *Must* is here used in the moral sense, "Then the Jew ought to be merciful."

[49] By what force (moral or physical) shall I be compelled to be merciful? Shylock clearly interprets the *must* in a legal sense.

[50] The nature of mercy is such as to act freely, not from constraint. Since the Jew mistook her meaning, she is justified in explaining the nature of mercy to him.

[51] It is as seasonable in affliction as rain is in time of drought.

[52] This line explains "twice bless'd" and Hudson speaks of it as "A beautiful version of the divine Christian axiom, The Acts 20:35, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

[53] Mercy is most powerful when shown by those who have absolute power to be unmerciful.

[54] Represents.

[55] That which inspires awe and symbolizes majesty.

[56] Prove itself to be.

When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,—
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;
And that same prayer[57] doth teach us all to render[58]
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much,
To mitigate[59] the justice of thy plea;
Which if thou follow,[60] this strict court of Venice
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

Shy. My deeds upon my head! I crave the law,
The penalty and forfeit of my bond.

Portia. Is he not able to discharge the money?

Bass. Yes, here I tender't for him in the court;
Yea, thrice the sum: if that will not suffice,
I will be bound to pay it ten times o'er,
On forfeit of my hands, my head, my heart:
If this will not suffice, it must appear
That malice bears down truth.[61] And, I beseech you,
Wrest once the law to your authority:
To do a great right, do a little wrong;
And curb this cruel devil of his will.

Portia. It must not be; there is no power in Venice
Can alter a decree establishéd:
'Twill be recorded for a precedent;

[57] The Lord's Prayer. Sir W. Blackstone scarcely regards it in point for Portia to quote Christian doctrine to a Jew.

[58] Literally, to *give back*, or *to return*.

[59] To make less severe the harshness of thy plea for justice.

[60] If you rigidly insist upon.

[61] Hatred outweighs honesty. *Truth* here means *honesty*.

And many an error, by the same example,
Will rush into the State. It cannot be.
Shy. A Daniel come to judgment! yea, a Daniel:—[62]
O wise young judge, how I do honour thee!
Portia. I pray you, let me look upon the bond.
Shy. Here 'tis, most reverend Doctor; here it is.
Portia. Shylock, there's thrice thy money offer'd thee.
Shy. An oath, an oath, I have an oath in Heaven:
Shall I lay perjury upon my soul?
No, not for Venice!
Portia. Why, this bond is forfeit;[63]
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off
Nearest the merchant's heart.—Be merciful;
Take thrice thy money; bid me tear the bond.
Shy. When it is paid according to the tenour.
It doth appear you are a worthy judge;
You know the law, your exposition
Hath been most sound: I charge you by the law,
Whereof you are a well-deserving pillar,
Proceed to judgment. By my soul I swear
There is no power in the tongue of man
To alter me: I stay here on my bond.
Anto. Most heartily I do beseech the court
To give the judgment.
Portia. Why, then thus it is:
You must prepare your bosom for his knife;—

[62] The allusion is to the *History of Susanna*, 45: "The Lord raised up the holy spirit of a young youth, whose name was Daniel."

[63] *Forfeited.*

Shy. O, noble judge! O, excellent young man!
Portia.—For the intent and purpose of the law
Hath full relation to the penalty,[64]
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.
Shy. 'Tis very true. O wise and upright judge!
How much more elder art thou than thy looks!
Portia. Therefore lay bare your bosom.
Shy. Ay, his breast
So says the bond:—doth it not, noble judge?—
Nearest his heart: those are the very[65] words.
Portia. It is so. Are there balance[66] here to weigh
The flesh?
Shy. I have them ready.
Portia. Have by some surgeon, Shylock, on your charge,[67]
To stop his wounds, lest he do bleed to death.
Shy. Is it so nominated[68] in the bond?
Portia. It is not so express'd; but what of that?
'Twere good you do so much for charity.
Shy. I cannot find it; 'tis not in the bond.
Portia. Come, merchant, have you any thing to say?
Anto. But little: I am arm'd and well prepared.—
Give me your hand, Bassanio: fare you well!
Grieve not that I am fall'n to this for you;
For herein Fortune shows herself more kind

[64] Clearly recognizes that the penalty should be paid. This is evidently a plain business contract and must be complied with.
[65] Exact, precise.
[66] "Ballances, or a payre of *ballance.*"
[67] At your expense.
[68] Stipulated.

Than is her custom: it is still her use[69]
To let the wretched man outlive his wealth,
To view with hollow eye and wrinkled brow
An age of poverty; from which lingering penance
Of such a misery doth she cut me off.
Commend me to your honourable wife:
Tell her the process of Antonio's end;
Say how I loved you, speak me fair in death,[70]
And, when the tale is told, bid her be judge
Whether Bassanio had not once a lover.[71]
Repent not you that you shall lose your friend,
And he repents not that he pays your debt;
For, if the Jew do cut but deep enough,
I'll pay it instantly with all my heart.

Bass. Antonio, I am married to a wife
Which[72] is as dear to me as life itself;
But life itself, my wife, and all the world,
Are not with me esteem'd above thy life:
I would lose all, ay, sacrifice them all
Here to this devil, to deliver you.

Portia. Your wife would give you little thanks for that,
If she were by, to hear you make the offer.

Grati. I have a wife, whom, I protest, I love:
I would she were in Heaven, so she could
Entreat some power to change this currish Jew.

[69] It is always her custom.

[70] "Speak well of me when I am dead," or "Tell the world that I died like a man."

[71] *Friend.*

[72] *Who.* *Which* and *who* were used both of persons and of things.

Neris. 'Tis well you offer it behind her back;
The wish would make, else, an unquiet house.
Shy. [*Aside.*] These be the Christian husbands! I have a daughter;
Would any of the stock of Bárrabas[73]
Had been her husband rather than a Christian!—
[*To* Portia.] We trifle time: I pray thee, pursue sentence.
Portia. A pound of that same merchant's flesh is thine:
The court awards it, and the law doth give it.
Shy. Most rightful judge!
Portia. And you must cut this flesh from off his breast:
The law allows it, and the court awards it.
Shy. Most learnèd Judge! A sentence!—Come, prepare.
Portia. Tarry a little; there is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;
The words expressly are, a pound of flesh:
Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;
But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods
Are by the laws of Venice confiscate[74]
Unto the State of Venice.
Grati. O upright judge!—Mark, Jew: O learnèd judge![75]

[73] The Jewish people.

[74] Confiscated.

[75] Gratiano here and below mocks the Jew by repeating the Jew's own words before he discovered the real issue of the case.

Shy. Is that the law?

Portia. Thyself shalt see the Act:
For, as thou urgest justice, be assured
Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desirest.

Grati. O learnèd judge!—Mark, Jew: a learnèd judge!

Shy. I take his offer, then;—pay the bond thrice,
And let the Christian go.

Bass. Here is the money.

Portia. Soft!
The Jew shall have all justice; soft! no haste:
He shall have nothing but the penalty.

Grati. O Jew, an upright judge, a learnèd judge!

Portia. Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.
Shed thou no blood; nor cut thou less nor more
But just a pound of flesh: if thou takest more
Or less than a just pound,[76]—be't but so much
As makes it light or heavy in the substance[77]
Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple; nay, if the scale do turn
But in the estimation of a hair,—
Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate.[78]

Grati. A second Daniel, a Daniel, Jew!
Now, infidel, I have thee on the hip.[79]

Portia. Why doth the Jew pause? take thy forfeiture.

Shy. Give me my principal, and let me go.

Bass. I have it ready for thee; here it is.

[76] An exact pound, or exactly a pound.

[77] The amount.

[78] Again *confiscated*.

[79] A mocking repetition of Shylock's words in Act I., Scene III.

Portia. He hath refused it in the open court:
He shall have merely justice and his bond.
Grati. A Daniel, still say I; a second Daniel!—
I thank thee, Jew, for teaching me that word.
Shy. Shall I not have barely my principal?
Portia. Thou shalt have nothing but the forfeiture,
To be so taken at thy peril, Jew.
Shy. Why, then the Devil give him good of it!
I'll stay no longer question.
Portia. Tarry, Jew:
The law hath yet another hold on you.
It is enacted in the laws of Venice,
If it be proved against an alien
That by direct or indirect attempts
He seek the life of any citizen,
The party 'gainst the which he doth contrive[80]
Shall seize one half his goods; the other half
Comes to the privy coffer of the State;
And the offender's life lies in the mercy
Of the Duke only, 'gainst all other voice.
In which predicament I say thou stand'st;
For it appears, by manifest proceeding,
That indirectly, and directly too,
Thou hast contrived against the very life
Of the defendant; and thou hast incurr'd
The danger formally by me rehearsed.
Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke.
Grati. Beg that thou mayst have leave to hang thyself:
And yet, thy wealth being forfeit to the State,

[80] Plot.

Thou hast not left the value of a cord;
Therefore thou must be hang'd at the State's charge.
Duke. That thou shalt see the difference of our spirit,
I pardon thee thy life before thou ask it:
For half thy wealth, it is Antonio's;
The other half comes to the general State,
Which humbleness may drive unto a fine.[81]
Portia. Ay, for the State; not for Antonio.[82]
Shy. Nay, take my life and all; pardon not that:
You take my house, when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house; you take my life,
When you do take the means whereby I live.
Portia. What mercy can you render him, Antonio?
Grati. A halter gratis; nothing else, for God's sake.
Anto. So please[83] my lord the Duke and all the court
To quit the fine[84] for one half of his goods,
I am content; so he will let me have
The other half in use,[85] to render it,
Upon his death, unto the gentleman
That lately stole his daughter:[86]
Two things provided more: That, for this favour,
He presently become a Christian;

[81] Which humble entreaty on your part may induce me to commute to a fine.

[82] The half of Shylock's goods which goes to the State may be commuted to a fine, but not the half that goes to Antonio.

[83] If it please.

[84] Remit the fine so far as the claim of the State is concerned.

[85] In trust.

[86] "That is, in trust for Shylock during his life, for the purpose of securing it at his death to Lorenzo."—Anon.

The other, that he do record a gift,
Here in the court, of all he dies possess'd,
Unto his son Lorenzo and his daughter.
Duke. He shall do this; or else I do recant
The pardon that I late pronouncèd here.
Portia. Art thou contented, Jew? what dost thou say?
Shy. I am content.
Portia. Clerk, draw a deed of gift.
Shy. I pray you, give me leave to go from hence;
I am not well: send the deed after me,
And I will sign it.
Duke. Get thee gone, but do it.
Grati. In christening thou shalt have two godfathers:
Had I been judge, thou shouldst have had ten more,[87]
To bring thee to the gallows, not the font.
[*Exit* Shylock.
Duke. Sir, I entreat you home with me to dinner.
Portia. I humbly do desire your Grace of pardon:[88]
I must away this night toward Padua,
And it is meet I presently set forth.
Duke. I'm sorry that your leisure serves you not.—
Antonio, gratify[89] this gentleman;
For, in my mind, you are much bound to him.
[*Exeunt* Duke, Magnificoes, *and Train.*
Bass. Most worthy gentleman, I and my friend
Have by your wisdom been this day acquitted

[87] To make up a jury of *twelve.*

[88] An old form of graciously proceeding to decline an invitation or request.

[89] Recompense.

Of grievous penalties; in lieu whereof,[90]
Three thousand ducats, due unto the Jew,
We freely cope[91] your courteous pains withal.
Anto. And stand indebted, over and above,
In love and service to you evermore.
Portia. He is well paid that is well satisfied;
And I, delivering you, am satisfied,
And therein do account myself well paid:
My mind was never yet more mercenary.
I pray you, know me when we meet again:
I wish you well, and so I take my leave.
Bass. Dear sir, of force I must attempt[92] you further:
Take some remembrance of us, as a tribute,
Not as a fee: grant me two things, I pray you,—
Not to deny me, and to pardon me.
Portia. You press me far, and therefore I will yield.—
[*To* ANTO.] Give me your gloves, I'll wear them for your sake;—
[*To* BASS.] And, for your love, I'll take this ring from you.
Do not draw back your hand: I'll take no more;
And you in love shall[93] not deny me this.
Bass. This ring, good sir,—alas, it is a trifle!
I will not shame myself to give you this.
Portia. I will have nothing else but only this;
And now methinks I have a mind to it.

[90] *In return for which.* The phrase has later come to mean *instead of*.
[91] Requite.
[92] Tempt.
[93] *Will.*

Bass. There's more depends on this than on the value.
The dearest ring in Venice will I give you,
And find it out by proclamation:
Only for this, I pray you, pardon me.
Portia. I see, sir, you are liberal in offers:
You taught me first to beg; and now methinks
You teach me how a beggar should be answer'd.
Bass. Good sir, this ring was given me by my wife;
And, when she put it on, she made me vow
That I should neither sell nor give nor lose it.
Portia. That 'scuse serves many men to save their gifts.
An if[94] your wife be not a mad-woman,
And know how well I have deserved this ring,
She would not hold out enemy for ever
For giving it to me. Well, peace be with you!
[*Exeunt* Portia *and* Nerissa.
Anto. My Lord Bassanio, let him have the ring:
Let his deservings, and my love withal,
Be valued 'gainst your wife's commandment.[95]
Bass. Go, Gratiano, run and overtake him;
Give him the ring; and bring him, if thou canst,
Unto Antonio's house. Away! make haste.—
[*Exit* Gratiano.
Come, you and I will thither presently;
And in the morning early will we both
Fly toward Belmont: come, Antonio. [*Exeunt.*

[94] *An if* is used merely as *if.*

[95] Pronounced as if having four syllables to preserve the meter. Spelled *commandement* in the old copies.

SCENE II.—*The Same. A Street.*

Enter PORTIA *and* NERISSA, *disguised as before.*

Portia. Inquire the Jew's house out, give him this deed,
And let him sign it: we'll away to-night,
And be a day before our husbands home.
This deed will be well welcome to Lorenzo.

Enter GRATIANO.

Grati. Fair sir, you are well overta'en:
My lord Bassanio, upon more advice,[1]
Hath sent you here this ring, and doth entreat
Your company at dinner.

Portia. That cannot be:
His ring I do accept most thankfully;
And so, I pray you, tell him: furthermore,
I pray you, show my youth old Shylock's house.

Grati. That will I do.

Neris. Sir, I would speak with you.—
[*To* PORTIA.] I'll see if I can get my husband's ring,
Which I did make him swear to keep for ever.

Portia. Thou mayst, I warrant. We shall have old[2] swearing
That they did give away the rings to men;
But we'll outface them, and outswear them too.
Away! make haste: thou know'st where I will tarry.

Neris. Come, good sir; will you show me to this house? [*Exeunt.*

[1] After further consideration.

[2] Perhaps the nearest equivalent polite expression is *huge*. Our common colloquial equivalent is *any old kind of swearing*.

ACT V.

Scene I.—*Belmont. Avenue to* Portia's *House.*

Enter Lorenzo *and* Jessica.

Loren. The Moon shines bright. In such a night as this,
When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,
And they did make no noise,—in such a night
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,
And sigh'd his soul toward the Grecian tents,
Where Cressid lay that night.[1]

Jess. In such a night
Did Thisbe fearfully o'ertrip the dew,
And saw the lion's shadow ere himself,[2]
And ran dismay'd away.

[1] The Play of Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, gives the complete story. Troilus was one of the fifty sons of King Priam of Troy. He fell in love with Cressida who, after apparently reciprocating his love, rejected him and took up with his enemy, the Greek Hero Diomedes. He was greatly affected and grieved sorely over the disappointment.

[2] Pyramus and Thisbe were two Babylonian lovers whose parents lived in adjoining houses. Through the defective partition wall these lovers communicated, since their parents forbade that they should marry, or even meet each other. It was agreed that they should meet, however, outside the city, by the Tomb of Ninus, under the white mulberry tree. As Thisbe sat alone in the twilight waiting for her belated lover, she saw a fierce lioness, her jaws reeking with blood, approaching the fountain to slake her thirst. Thisbe fled in haste, dropping her veil, which later the lioness rent in pieces with her bloody mouth. Pyramus arriving tardily, and guessing Thisbe's fate from the torn, bloody veil, drew his sword and plunged it into his heart. Meanwhile, Thisbe clambered out of the hollow rock where

Loren. In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow[3] in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks, and waved her love
To come again to Carthage.
Jess. In such a night
Medea gather'd the enchanted herbs
That did renew old Æson.[4]
Loren. In such a night
Did Jessica steal from the wealthy Jew,
And with an únthrift love[5] did run from Venice
As far as Belmont.
Jess. And in such a night
Did young Lorenzo swear he loved her well,

she sought refuge and returned to realize that Pyramus had slain himself for her sake. Instantly she seized his sword and, taking her own life, joined her lover in death.

[3] The willow is a symbol of forsaken love. Dido, Queen of Carthage, received Æneas, the wandering Trojan hero, with great kindness and honor at her court. She conceived an ardent passion for him and he seemed well content to abandon his wanderings for a home, a kingdom, and a bride. Meanwhile, Jupiter commanded the tardy wanderer to resume his voyage. Æneas finally departed, although Dido used every allurement to detain him. The blow to her affection and her pride was so great that she mounted a funeral pile, took her own life, and was consumed in the flames which lighted Æneas on his way to found an empire on the shores of Italy.

[4] Medea, daughter to the King of Colchos, fell in love with Jason, helped him to win the fleece, then stole her father's treasure, and ran away with Jason to Greece. Now Jason's father, Æson, was very old and decayed; and Medea was a potent enchantress, the most so of all the ancient girls: so, with the hidden power of herbs and might of magic spell, she made a most plenipotent broth, wherewith she renewed the old man's youth.

[5] Modestly speaking of himself as lacking thrift.

Stealing her soul with many vows of faith,
And ne'er a true one.

Loren. And in such a night
Did pretty Jessica, like a little shrew,
Slander her love, and he forgave it her.

Jess. I would out-night you, did nobody come:
But, hark! I hear the footing of a man.

Enter Stephano.

Loren. Who comes so fast in silence of the night?

Stephano. A friend.

Loren. A friend! what friend? your name, I pray you, friend?

Steph. Stephano[6] is my name; and I bring word
My mistress will before the break of day
Be here at Belmont: she doth stray about
By holy crosses,[7] where she kneels and prays
For happy wedlock hours.

Loren. Who comes with her?

Steph. None but a holy hermit and her maid.
I pray you, is my master yet return'd?

Loren. He is not, nor we have not heard from him.—
But go we in,[8] I pray thee, Jessica,

[6] Accented on the second syllable. In the Tempest, the name appears rightly accented on the first syllable.

[7] Besides the holy crosses in the churches, there were many scattered, throughout Italy. They marked the spots where heroes were born, where saints rested, where travellers died. They rose on hill-tops and at the intersection of roads, and even mark sacred spots in the sea where gondolier and mariner crossed themselves in passing.

[8] *Let us go in.* Similarly in Hamlet I., 1. "Well *sit we* down and *let us hear* Bernardo speak of this."

And ceremoniously let us prepare
Some welcome for the mistress of the house.

Enter LAUNCELOT.

Laun. Sola, sola! wo, ha, ho! sola, sola![9]

Loren. Who calls?

Laun. Sola!—did you see Master Lorenzo and Mistress Lorenzo?—sola, sola!

Loren. Leave hollaing, man: here.

Laun. Sola!—Where? where?

Loren. Here.

Laun. Tell him there's a post come from my master, with his horn full of good news: my master will be here ere morning. [*Exit.*

Loren. Sweet soul, let's in, and there expect[10] their coming.
And yet no matter: why should we go in?—
My friend Stephano, signify, I pray you,
Within the house, your mistress is at hand;
And bring your music[11] forth into the air.— [*Exit* STEPHANO.

How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank!
Here will we sit, and let the sounds of music
Creep in our ears: soft stillness and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.

[9] An imitation of the postman's horn. The postman carried a horn and blew it to give people notice that he had mail for them, much the same as the milkman rings his bell from house to house.

[10] Await.

[11] This word sometimes meant musical instruments; sometimes a band of players.

Sit, Jessica. Look, how the floor of Heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines[12] of bright gold:
There's not the smallest orb which thou behold'st
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring[13] to the young-eyed cherubins:
Such harmony is in immortal souls;[14]
But, whilst this muddy vesture of decay
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it.—

Enter Musicians.

Come, ho, and wake Diana with a hymn!
With sweetest touches pierce your mistress' ear,
And draw her home with music. [*Music.*

Jess. I'm never merry when I hear sweet music.

Loren. The reason is, your spirits are attentive:
For do but note a wild and wanton herd,
Or race of youthful and unhandled colts,
Fetching mad bounds, bellowing, and neighing loud,
Which is the hot condition of their blood;
If they but hear perchance a trumpet sound,
Or any air of music touch their ears,
You shall perceive them make a mutual[15] stand,

[12] A small plate, sometimes made of gold, used for the sacramental bread in the administration of the Eucharist.

[13] *Still quiring*, continually playing an accompaniment. "The music of the spheres,"—an ancient mystery which taught that the heavenly bodies in their revolutions sing together in a concert so loud, various, and sweet, as to exceed all proportion to the human ear."—Hudson.

[14] Besides the music of the spheres, which no mortal ear ever caught a note of, there was supposed to be a harmony in the human soul.

[15] Common.

Their savage eyes turn'd to a modest gaze,
By the sweet power of music: therefore the poet
Did feign that Orpheus[16] drew trees, stones, and floods;
Since nought so stockish, hard, and full of rage,
But music for the time doth change his nature.
The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:[17]
Let no such man be trusted. Mark the music.

Enter PORTIA *and* NERISSA *at a distance.*

Portia. That light we see is burning in my hall.
How far that little candle throws his beams!
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.

Neris. When the Moon shone we did not see the candle.

Portia. So doth the greater glory dim the less:
A substitute shines brightly as a king,
Until a king be by; and then his state

[16] Orpheus was the son of Apollo and the Muse Calliope. He was married to Eurydice, who died of a serpent's sting. Orpheus went down to Hades to claim her, and played so sweetly upon his lute that Pluto consented that Eurydice should return to earth following Orpheus, but on condition that he should not look back until he had reached the earth. Orpheus, in his anxiety to see if Eurydice really followed, looked round, and Eurydice disappeared instantly and forever.

[17] Erebus, son of Chaos, and often alluded to as representing the darkest part of the infernal regions.

Empties itself, as doth an inland brook,
Into the main of waters. Music! hark!

Neris. It is your music, madam, of the house.[18]

Portia. Nothing is good, I see, without respect:[19]
Methinks it sounds much sweeter than by day.

Neris. Silence bestows that virtue on it, madam.

Portia. The crow doth sing as sweetly as the lark,
When neither is attended;[20] and I think
The nightingale, if she should sing by day
When every goose is cackling, would be thought
No better a musician than the wren.
How many things by season season'd[21] are
To their right praise and true perfection!—
Peace, ho! the Moon sleeps with Endymion,[22]
And would not be awaked! [*Music ceases.*

Loren. That is the voice,
Or I am much deceived, of Portia.

Portia. He knows me, as the blind man knows the cuckoo,
By the bad voice.

[18] *Music of the house,* that is, a band of musicians.

[19] Absolutely without regard to circumstances.

[20] Is listened to attentively.

[21] How many things show their true excellence and are hence properly appreciated because they come at the proper time, the psychological moment!

[22] Endymion was a beautiful young shepherd to whom Jupiter granted the rare gift of perpetual youth, united with perpetual sleep on Mount Latmos. Diana, the Moon-Goddess, or Luna, looked down and saw him sleeping. "The cold heart of the virgin goddess was warmed by his surpassing beauty and she came down to him, kissed him, and watched over him while he slept."

Loren. Dear lady, welcome home.
Portia. We have been praying for our husbands' welfare,
Which speed, we hope, the better for our words.
Are they return'd?
Loren. Madam, they are not yet;
But there is come a messenger before,
To signify their coming.
Portia. Go in, Nerissa:
Give order to my servants that they take
No note at all of our being absent hence;—
Nor you, Lorenzo;—Jessica, nor you. [*A Tucket*[23] *sounds.*
Loren. Your husband is at hand; I hear his trumpet:
We are no tell-tales, madam; fear you not.
Portia. This night, methinks, is but the daylight sick;
It looks a little paler: 'tis a day,
Such as a day is when the Sun is hid.

Enter BASSANIO, ANTONIO, GRATIANO, *and their Followers.*

Bass. We should hold day with the Antipodes,[24] I you would walk in absence of the Sun.
Portia. Let me give light, but let me not be light;[25]
For a light wife doth make a heavy husband,

[23] A *tucket* is a series of notes on the trumpet to announce the approach of an important personage.

[24] The Antipodes are those who live on the opposite side of the earth. If Portia should walk abroad at night, her presence would make night as bright as day.

[25] A play on *light*. She does not desire to be *light* in character.

And never be Bassanio so for me:
But God sort all![26] You're welcome home, my lord.
Bass. I thank you, madam. Give welcome to my friend:
This is the man, this is Antonio,
To whom I am so infinitely bound.
Portia. You should in all sense[27] be much bound to him,
For, as I hear, he was much bound for you.
Anto. No more than I am well acquitted of.[28]
Portia. Sir, you are very welcome to our house:
It must appear in other ways than words,
Therefore I scant[29] this breathing courtesy.[30]
Grati. [*To* Neris.] By yonder Moon I swear you do me wrong;
In faith, I gave it to the judge's clerk.
Portia. A quarrel, ho, already! what's the matter?
Grati. About a hoop of gold, a paltry ring
That she did give to me; whose posy[31] was
For all the world like cutler's poetry
Upon a knife,[32] *Love me, and leave me not.*[33]

[26] May God order all things!

[27] *In all reason.*

[28] No more than I am well repaid for.

[29] *To cut short.*

[30] This form of compliment made up of words only.

[31] Motto inscribed on inner side of ring. The Rev. Giles Moore, in his Journal 1673–4, writes, "I bought for Ann Brett a gold ring, this being the posy: *When this you see, remember me.*"

[32] Knives were formerly inscribed with short mottoes.

[33] Do not part with me.

Neris. What talk you of the posy or the value?
You swore to me, when I did give it you,
That you would wear it till your hour of death;
And that it should lie with you in your grave:
Though not for me, yet for your vehement oaths,
You should have been respective,[34] and have kept it.
Gave it a judge's clerk! no, God's my judge!
The clerk will ne'er wear hair on's face that had it.

Grati. He will, an if he live to be a man.

Neris. Ay, if a woman live to be a man.

Grati. Now, by this hand, I gave it to a youth,
A kind of boy; a little scrubbed[35] boy,
No higher than thyself, the judge's clerk;
A prating boy, that begg'd it as a fee:
I could not for my heart deny it him.

Portia. You were to blame—I must be plain with you—
To part so slightly with your wife's first gift;
A thing stuck on with oaths upon your finger,
And riveted with faith unto your flesh.
I gave my love a ring, and made him swear
Never to part with it; and here he stands:
I dare be sworn for him, he would not leave it,
Nor pluck it from his finger, for the wealth
That the world masters. Now, in faith, Gratiano,
You give your wife too ûnkind cause of grief:
An 'twere to me, I should be mad at it.

[34] Considerate, regardful. Romeo and Juliet, III., 1. "Away to Heaven respective lenity, and fire-eyed fury be my conduct now!"

[35] *Stunted.* The term *scrub oak* is commonly used in same sense.

Bass. [*Aside.*] Why, I were best to cut my left hand off,
And swear I lost the ring defending it.
Grati. My lord Bassanio gave his ring away
Unto the judge that begg'd it, and indeed
Deserved it too; and then the boy, his clerk,
That took some pains in writing, he begg'd mine:
And neither man nor master would take aught
But the two rings.
Portia. What ring gave you, my lord?
Not that, I hope, which you received of me.
Bass. If I could add a lie unto a fault,
I would deny it; but you see my finger
Hath not the ring upon it,—it is gone.
Portia. Even so void is your false heart of truth.
By Heaven, I will ne'er come in your bed
Until I see the ring.
Neris. Nor I in yours
Till I again see mine.
Bass. Sweet Portia,
If you did know to whom I gave the ring,
If you did know for whom I gave the ring,
And would conceive for what I gave the ring,
And how unwillingly I left the ring,
When nought would be accepted but the ring,
You would abate the strength of your displeasure.
Portia. If you had known the virtue of the ring,[36]
Or half her worthiness that gave the ring,
Or your own honour to contain[37] the ring,

[36] The power it symbolizes; for it is the pledge of the right to Portia and her possessions.

[37] *Retain.*

You would not then have parted with the ring.
What man is there so much unreasonable,
If you had pleased to have defended it
With any terms of zeal, wanted[38] the modesty
To urge[39] the thing held as a ceremony?
Nerissa teaches me what to believe:
I'll die for't, but some woman had the ring.[40]

Bass. No, by mine honour, madam, by my soul,
No woman had it; but a Civil Doctor,[41]
Which did refuse three thousand ducats of me,
And begg'd the ring; the which I did deny him,
And suffer'd him to go displeased away;
Even he that did uphold the very life
Of my dear friend. What should I say, sweet lady?
I was enforced to send it after him:
I was beset with shame and courtesy;[42]
My honour would not let ingratitude
So much besmear it. Pardon me, good lady;
For, by these blessèd candles of the night,[43]
Had you been there, I think you would have begg'd
The ring of me to give the worthy Doctor.

Portia. Let not that Doctor e'er come near my house.
Since he hath got the jewel that I loved,
And that which you did swear to keep for me,

[38] As to have wanted or lacked.
[39] To urge you to give him.
[40] I'd wager my life that some woman has the ring.
[41] Doctor of Civil Law.
[42] I was ashamed of myself for my discourtesy.
[43] The moon and stars.

I will become as liberal as you:
I'll not deny him any thing I have.
Neris. Nor I his clerk; therefore be well advised[44]
How you do leave me to mine own protection.
Grati. Well, do you so: let not me take him then;
For, if I do, I'll mar the young clerk's pen.
Anto. I am th' unhappy subject of these quarrels.
Portia. Sir, grieve not you; you're welcome notwithstanding.
Bass. Portia, forgive me this enforcèd wrong;
And in the hearing of these many friends
I swear to thee, even by thine own fair eyes,
Wherein I see myself,—
Portia. Mark you but that!
In both my eyes he doubly sees himself;
In each eye, one:—swear by your double self,[45]
And there's an oath of credit!
Bass. Nay, but hear me:
Pardon this fault, and by my soul I swear
I never more will break an oath with thee.
Anto. I once did lend my body for his wealth;[46]
Which,[47] but for him that had your husband's ring,
Had quite miscarried: I dare be bound again,
My soul upon the forfeit, that your lord
Will never more break faith advisedly.[48]

[44] Be very cautious.
[45] By the reflection of yourself in each eye.
[46] Welfare, weal, happiness.
[47] Which *loan.*
[48] Deliberately.

Portia. Then you shall be his surety: give him this;
And bid him keep it better than the other.
Anto. Here, Lord Bassanio; swear to keep this ring.
Bass. By Heaven, it is the same I gave the Doctor!
Portia. I had it of him; pardon me, Bassanio.
Neris. And pardon me, my gentle Gratiano.
Grati. Why, this is like the mending of highways
In Summer, when the ways are fair enough.
Portia. You are all amazed: 270
Here is a letter, read it at your leisure;
It comes from Padua, from Bellario:
There you shall find that Portia was the Doctor;
Nerissa there her clerk. Lorenzo here
Shall witness I set forth as soon as you,
And even but now return'd; I have not yet
Enter'd my house.—Antonio, you are welcome;
And I have better news in store for you
Than you expect: unseal this letter soon;
There you shall find three of your argosies 280
Are richly[49] come to harbour suddenly.[50]
You shall not know by what strange accident
I chancèd on this letter.
Anto. I am dumb.
Bass. Were you the Doctor, and I knew you not?
Anto. Sweet lady, you have given me life and living;[51]

[49] Richly laden.

[50] Unexpectedly. *Sudden* was frequently used in the sense of *unexpected.*

[51] *Means of living.* Portia has delivered Antonio from the clutches of the Jew.

For here I read for certain that my ships
Are safely come to road.[52]
Portia. How now, Lorenzo!
My clerk hath some good comforts too for you.
Neris. Ay, and I'll give them him without a fee.—
There do I give to you and Jessica,
From the rich Jew, a special deed of gift,
After his death, of all he dies possess'd of.
Loren. Fair ladies, you drop manna in the way
Of starvèd people.
Portia. It is almost morning,
And yet I'm sure you are not satisfied
Of these events at full. Let us go in;
And charge us there upon inter'gatories,[53]
And we will answer all things faithfully.
Grati. Well, while I live, I'll fear[54] no other thing
So sore[55] as keeping safe Nerissa's ring. [*Exeunt.*

[52] *To harbor.* See Act I., Scene I., "ports, and piers, and roads."

[53] In the Court of Queen's Bench, when a complaint is made against a person for a "contempt," the practice is that, before sentence is finally pronounced, he is sent into the Crown Office, and, being there "charged upon interrogatories," he is made to swear that he will "answer all things faithfully."—Lord Campbell.

[54] *Fear for,* or *be concerned about.*

[55] *So zealously, so grievously.*

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS STUDY

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Introduction

1. State briefly the origin of this play.
2. Upon what two ancient stories is the play founded?
3. Sketch briefly each of the two stories.
4. Locate Venice, and look up its history as a commercial city.
5. Look up something of the history of the persecution of the Jews in the Middle Ages.
6. Give briefly the story of The Merchant of Venice.
7. In the study of the following questions, consult frequently the "Comments on the Play" in the Introduction to this volume, in addition to a most careful study of the text itself.

Act I., Scene I.

1. Just what must have been "A Street" referred to here?
2. How is the nature of Antonio's business shown at the outset?
3. Why, then, is Antonio in such a heavy mood? Has he had reports of losses?
4. Are the explanations of Salarino and Solanio sufficient to account for Antonio's mood?
5. What are Antonio's reasons why the risks of business do not cause his sadness?

6. What other reason for his sadness is suggested? What inference do you draw from his answer?

7. What of humor do you find in Salarino's explanation following? What two types does he mention?

8. Why, apparently, had these friends stayed so long with Antonio?

9. What new friends appear?

10. What shows Antonio's mood now?

11. What seems to be the purpose of Gratiano's long speech before leaving?

12. Explain Antonio's "I'll grow a talker for this gear."

13. Is there any connection between Antonio's sadness and Bassanio's secret?

14. What is Antonio's attitude toward Bassanio as shown in "I pray you," etc?

15. How could Antonio be so willing to trust Bassanio farther? Was he not a poor business man?

16. What first impressions are we given of Portia in the words of Bassanio?

17. Why does Bassanio hesitate to ask for the loan? Is his plan an honorable one?

18. Why should Antonio be willing to take such risks and pains to secure money for Bassanio?

19. Just what is shown of Antonio in this scene?

20. What kind of business man is he?

Act I., Scene II.

1. What in the opening of this scene shows unrestrained girlish chatter?

2. What is Portia's mood as the scene opens?

3. What was "the will of a dead father" that "curbed" that of the daughter?

4. How is the father's plan commended to us?

5. What is shown of Portia in this discussion of each of the suitors?

6. What keen insight into character is shown in each of these estimates?

7. What type of man is it that "will fence with his own shadow"?

8. What kind of man is one who can be spoken of as a "dumb-show"?

9. By what clever scheme does Portia hope to prevent herself from falling to the German Duke by chance?

10. Why were these lords unwilling to try for Portia according to the father's plan?

11. Nevertheless, what is Portia's resolution? What reconciles her to her conclusion in these cases?

12. What does this scene suggest as the possible outcome of the choice by means of the caskets?

13. What are the most admirable traits shown in Portia in this scene?

14. How does the spirit of this scene compare with that of Scene I.?

Act I., Scene III.

1. What request has Bassanio just made as the scene opens?

2. If Antonio's credit is good, why does not Shylock take his bond at once?

3. Why does Shylock desire to speak with Antonio personally?

4. What reasons does Shylock give for hating Antonio? What is shown of Antonio in the reasons given?

5. Why does Shylock prolong the interview with Antonio and Bassanio?

6. What of truth is in Shylock's charges against Antonio?

7. What is shown of Antonio in the speech beginning, "I am as like to call thee so again"?

8. Explain Shylock's "To buy his favour I extend this friendship."

9. What appears as Shylock's real motive in this "merry sport"?

10. Cite the passages in this scene which show Shylock's shrewdness.

11. To what extent do we sympathize with the Jew?

12. What deeper truth in Bassanio's "I like not fair terms and a villain's mind"?

13. What is shown of Antonio in his readiness to sign such a bond? In his risking his whole fortune at sea at one time?

Act II., Scene I.

1. What is shown of Morocco as compared with the dismissed suitors of an earlier scene?

2. What is the lottery of Portia's destiny?

3. What is shown of Morocco in that he is willing to take the risk?

4. Why does Portia explain so carefully the conditions of his taking the chance?

5. Why is Morocco so ready to be led to the caskets?

6. If such a one as this prince loses, who only may win?

7. Was this method of securing a husband superior to that of having the father, while living, select the daughter's husband? Explain.

Act II., Scene II.

1. What purpose in introducing Launcelot Gobbo here? Is *comedy* merely something to laugh at? (See Dr. Sherman's *What is Shakespeare? The Dramatic Art of Macbeth.*)

2. What points of seriousness in the meeting of father and son?

3. What hints are given of Shylock in Launcelot's dislike to continue in his service?

4. Just why does Launcelot desire to leave Shylock? What "wrong" has the Jew done Launcelot?

5. Why should Gratiano accompany Bassanio to Belmont?

6. How are their natures contrasted?

7. Why does Gratiano "bar tonight"?

8. What is the evident purpose of this scene?

Act II., Scene III.

1. Why should Shylock desire to make it disagreeable for Launcelot?

2. Explain Jessica's "Our house is hell."

3. Why to her is Launcelot a "merry devil"?

4. What interest has she in Lorenzo? Is he Jew or Christian?

5. Why does she command Launcelot to deliver the letter *secretly?*

6. What delicate hint is given of Jessica in that even Launcelot weeps at parting?

7. Why is Jessica "ashamed to be my father's child"?

8. Explain "though I am a daughter to his blood, I am not to his manners."

9. To what "strife" does she refer?

10. What experiences have doubtless encouraged her to become a Christian?

Act II., Scene IV.

1. What makes us assent to Lorenzo's plan for Jessica?

2. How does the suggestion of the masquerade help the situation?

3. Just what is Lorenzo's plan? Is it an honorable one? Explain.

4. Was it for the *gold and jewels*, for her own sake, or for vengeance against the *faithless Jew* that Lorenzo was so ready to enter upon this undertaking?

5. Contrast Bassanio and Lorenzo as lovers.

6. Upon what Christian basis could Lorenzo's conduct be justified?

7. How will Shylock naturally regard such a proceeding?

Act II., Scene V.

1. What feeling does Shylock show at the opening of the scene?

2. Does Shylock desire Launcelot to leave him for Bassanio? Explain.

3. Why does Shylock accept an invitation to eat with Christians after having refused so vigorously?

4. How does his going, and turning the keys over to Jessica help to further her plans?

5. What is the real meaning in Launcelot's rhymed couplet to Jessica?

6. Why does Jessica tell a *white lie* in answer to her father's question?

7. Why does Shylock say he parts with Launcelot?

8. What is the meaning of Jessica's last words in the scene?

9. What feeling has Shylock shown throughout this scene?

10. What now seems to be the meaning of Shylock's dream mentioned in the first part of the scene?

11. In what spirit will Shylock conduct his business with the Christians?

Act II., Scene VI.

1. Explain the situation at the opening of this scene.

2. Explain, "All things that are, are with more spirit chased than enjoy'd."

3. What significance in Lorenzo's "play the thieves for wives"?

4. Explain "my father Jew."

5. Why should Jessica be "ashamed" of "my exchange"?

6. Why does Jessica take this casket of money and jewels? Does she do the right thing under the circumstances?

7. From what you see of Jessica thus far, does she merit Lorenzo's praise?

8. Why does Bassanio depart so hastily?

9. How do you explain Jessica's conduct in this scene? To what extent is Shylock to blame?

Act II., Scene VII.

1. Why is the action of the play now transferred to Belmont?

2. Upon what conditions only could Portia choose a husband?

3. Just what is lacking in Morocco?

4. For what reason does Morocco choose the casket of gold?

5. Why did he hesitate so long in his choice?

6. Did Portia give him any hints to guide him in his choice?

7. What delicate compliments did he pay Portia in choosing the golden casket?

8. Explain the reference to *angel*.

9. What rebuke to the prince in the written scroll?

10. Was this prince sincere? Explain.

11. Was Portia sincere? Explain.

Act II., Scene VIII.

1. What is the connection between the opening of this scene and the close of Scene 6?

2. To what degree was Shylock incensed when he discovered that Jessica had deserted him?

3. Was his anger caused by the loss of his daughter, by the loss of money and jewels, or by both? Explain fully.

4. Why should the Duke go in person to search Bassanio's ship?

5. Who is likely to suffer most for Jessica's escapade? Why?

6. What traits of character are shown in Antonio by his treatment of Bassanio?

7. How much of the three months have now elapsed?

8. Has not Antonio just cause for concern as to his own fate?

9. What traits of character are shown in Antonio in this solemn parting?

Act II., Scene IX.

1. Upon what three conditions could a person become a candidate for Portia's hand?

2. Why were not these conditions told us in the case of Morocco's choice?

3. Compare Aragon and Morocco as suitors.

4. Explain "With one fool's head I came to woo, But I go away with two."

5. What indicates whether or not Aragon was sincere?

6. What are his leading characteristics as a lover?

7. Why does Portia refer to these suitors as "deliberate fools"?

8. To what extent can her own heart be in this business? Does she seem perfectly sincere? Explain.

9. What change in the spirit of the scene when the servant announces "so likely an ambassador of love"?

10. What hint is given of the favorite suitor? Was it the suitor's gifts merely that produced the change of spirit in Portia?

Act III., Scene I.

1. What strong contrast between this scene and the previous one?

2. Are the reports of Antonio's losses stronger or weaker because coming through friends? Explain.

3. What seems uppermost in Shylock's mind as he now enters?

4. What is the effect upon Shylock of the stinging jests of Salanio and Salarino?

5. What vengeance does Shylock suggest?

6. With what does Shylock charge Antonio?

7. What is Shylock's defense as a Jew?

8. Compare Christians and Jews according to Shylock.

9. Explain, "The villainy you teach me. I will execute." What villainy had Christians taught the Jews?

10. Explain, "a third cannot be matched, unless the Devil himself turn Jew."

11. Just what central purpose is accomplished by Tubal?

12. What two reasons does Shylock give for wishing to be rid of Antonio?

13. Why did these reports of Antonio's losses fly so rapidly?

14. What seems to be the purpose of this scene?

Act III., Scene II.

1. Why should Portia ask Bassanio to "pause a day or two" before choosing the casket? Why wish him to delay?

2. What shows her genuine love for Bassanio?

3. Why does she not treat all suitors alike? Is she not violating the conditions imposed upon her? Is she not, then, dishonest?

4. What evidences of genuine womanliness do you find in Portia?

5. To what extent did these two reach an understanding before the choice of the caskets was made? Cite passages in proof.

6. What suggestion of the song guided Bassanio in his choice? Why were not the other suitors entertained with music and song?

7. What insight did Bassanio show in making the choice?

8. What was the immediate effect of the choice on Portia?

9. How far does Portia show herself to be "an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractised"?

10. Just what is the significance of the ring? On what conditions given to Bassanio?

11. What return pledge does Bassanio give?

12. What is the effect of the announcement and request of Nerissa and Gratiano?

13. What was Nerissa's station at Belmont?

14. What additional effect is caused by the appearance of Lorenzo and Jessica at Belmont?

15. What were the contents of Antonio's letter?

16. Why should Bassanio show so much feeling?

17. Explain "every word in it a gaping wound, issuing life-blood."

18. Meanwhile what is Shylock doing in Venice? In what mood is he shown to be?

19. What further is shown of Shylock in the words of Jessica? Why does she fear for Antonio?

20. What effect is produced by Portia's attitude? Why does she boldly state her position before hearing Antonio's letter?

21. What has been accomplished in this scene? Are we now more or less committed to the cause of Antonio?

Act III., Scene III.

1. Just what is the situation at the opening of this scene? How much time has passed since the beginning of the play?

2. In what mood is Shylock?

3. What are the laws of Venice concerning strangers, or foreigners?

4. What is Antonio's attitude toward Shylock?

5. What significant hint contained in this scene as to Shylock's purpose?

6. What feeling does the scene arouse in us toward Shylock? Toward Antonio?

Act III., Scene IV.

1. How is Portia's interest in Antonio increased at the opening of this scene?

2. What trust is now committed to Lorenzo?

3. What does Portia affirm to be her purpose in going into seclusion?

4. What tells that she has a different purpose? What is her real plan?

5. What is shown of Portia in the passage beginning, "They shall, Nerissa"?

6. How does Portia know her plans will fit so well into the case of Antonio?

Act III., Scene V.

1. What witty passages are here introduced and for what purpose?

2. What effect upon us of Jessica's declaring "he hath made me a Christian"?

3. What is shown of Jessica in her enthusiastic praise of Portia?

4. Why is Jessica so content to remain away from her father?

5. To what extent are these Christians to blame for this?

Act IV., Scene I.

1. Does the Duke seem to be an impartial magistrate? Cite passages in proof.

2. What is shown of Antonio in his answer to the Duke?

3. What is shown of Shylock in the Duke's appeal?

4. What makes Shylock so bold before the court?

5. For what reason does Shylock say he presses this losing suit against Antonio?

6. What is shown of Antonio in his analysis of Shylock's nature and in his readiness for judgment?

7. What is shown of Shylock in his refusal to accept Bassanio's offer?

8. At what point in this trial scene does Shylock stand supreme?

9. What only hope for mercy remains?

10. What effect is produced by Shylock's whetting his knife to cut the pound of Antonio's flesh?

11. Is or is not Gratiano justified in rating Shylock so soundly?

12. What is the purport of Bellario's letter?

13. Is it likely that this letter was genuine or a forgery?

14. Did Portia know more or less about this case than a young judge coming from a distance should know?

15. Why does Portia first appeal to the Jew for mercy? Memorize the passage beginning, "The quality of mercy is not strained."

16. How is Shylock fortified against this appeal?

17. How then does Portia first skillfully entrap Shylock?

18. Why is he so ready for judgment?

19. What is shown of Shylock in that he has the scales ready in addition to the sharp knife?

20. What is shown in Antonio's answer to Portia's "Have you anything to say?"

21. What touch of humor in Bassanio's declaration of love for Antonio and Portia's reply? In Gratiano's statement and Nerissa's answer?

22. What is Portia's decree in this case? How does Shylock first receive it?

23. What supplementary explanations follow? What effect upon Shylock?

24. Why is Shylock not now allowed to take the money and depart?

25. What effect is produced by Gratiano's mocking Shylock?

26. What punishment is meted out to Shylock and for what cause?

27. To what extent does Portia mete out the mercy she so eloquently plead for with the Jew?

28. What then is the complete penalty exacted of Shylock? Has justice been done him?

29. Were the presiding officers wholly disinterested parties? What of conspiracy against Shylock is here shown? Did he deserve such treatment?

30. What "fee" does Portia accept for her services?

Act IV., Scene II.

1. Why does Bassanio at first refuse the ring, then later send it to Portia?

2. What is the purpose of the ring episode?

3. Have others than Shylock been punished in this act?

4. What, if anything, justifies Antonio's release from his bond and Shylock's forfeiture of half his wealth to the man who stole his daughter?

Act V., Scene I.

1. What characteristics of Lorenzo and Jessica are shown in the opening of the scene?

2. Why does the announcement of Stephano cause little surprise?

3. What change is apparent in Launcelot under his new master?

4. What purpose is served by the moonlight and the music of this scene?

5. What does Lorenzo declare concerning the power of music?

6. In what mood do Portia and Nerissa return?

7. Why does Portia now say, "We have been praying for our husbands' welfare"?

8. How does Portia now regard Antonio?

9. What must have been Portia's purpose in causing this quarrel over the rings?

10. Were not both men untrue to promises made their wives?

11. Do they attempt to deceive their wives when closely pressed for explanations?

12. What strokes of good fortune come to all concerned at the close of the play?

13. Why is this last scene essential to the play?

Summary

1. It has been said by some critics that "Shylock is the only Christian in the play." Discuss this fully. Was or was he not the only one who kept his promises without trickery or deceit?

2. Write a characterization of each of the following: Portia, Jessica, Antonio, Bassanio.

3. What is the central thought of the play?

4. In what other great literary selections have Jewish characters figured strongly?

5. Summarize the play using questions as outline.

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(13) All that glitters is
not gold;—
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that told:
Many a man his life
hath sold,
(14) The devil can cite
Scripture for his
purpose.
(15) Wrinkles should merit
respect
in making
[illegible]

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